

THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

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TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

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LEADING DHS NEWS

DHS Secretary: 'I Am Not Encouraging In Any Way, Shape Or Form Illegal Migration'

By Elise Foley

[Huffington Post](#), June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON – Faced with conservative attacks that the Obama administration is to blame for a dramatic influx of unaccompanied minors crossing the border illegally, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson issued a plea on Thursday to parents of undocumented children: Don't send or bring them to the U.S. without authorization.

"My message to your readership, your audience of those who may have children in Central America whom they want to reunite with, is that illegal migration is not safe," Johnson told reporters at a press conference. "Illegal migration through the south Texas border is not safe. A processing center is no place for your child. Putting your child in the hands of a criminal smuggling organization is not safe."

"I am not encouraging in any way, shape or form illegal migration," Johnson added. "That's the message."

About 47,000 unaccompanied minors have been apprehended while crossing the southern border of the U.S. since October 2013, and the number is projected to hit 70,000 by the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30. Numbers

had been creeping up for years, but this most recent surge has proved a challenge for DHS and the Department of Health and Human Services, which is tasked with housing the children.

The situation is considered by many to be a humanitarian crisis, but partisan finger-pointing began almost immediately after the influx began to draw broad news coverage. Some Republicans argued that President Barack Obama's immigration policies, particularly one that allows undocumented young people to apply to stay in the country, are giving the impression that children who come to the country will be welcomed.

Most of the unaccompanied minors coming through Mexico are from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, and they're fleeing to other countries as well as the United States. Experts say that many are likely escaping gang violence or economic stability or, in some cases, coming to the U.S. to reunite with their families.

Some critics of the president have gone so far as to argue that the government's treatment of currently detained unaccompanied minors is encouraging them to come to the country. The minors are being provided housing – often in cramped facilities, with allegations of abuse – and medical screenings, and government agencies have shared resources to transport them between facilities. A reporter's question to Johnson exemplified the argument that this treatment could serve as a magnet: "If you're providing these children with so many services, from transportation to health care, education, housing, even legal representation as [the Department of Justice] has announced, isn't that incentivizing people to come to this country?"

Johnson replied that he would say no, and he reiterated that the children are ineligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that gives reprieve to some young undocumented immigrants who entered the country as children, or legalization under the Senate-passed immigration bill that's currently languishing in the House. Once here, unaccompanied minors aren't eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program because it applies only to undocumented immigrants who were in the country by June 15, 2007.

Johnson said the government is running a campaign in Spanish- and English-language radio, television and print "to talk about the dangers of sending kids over the border and the dangers of putting kids into the hands of criminal smuggling organizations."

DHS is required by law to hand over undocumented minors within 72 hours to HHS, which houses them and looks for relatives in the U.S. who can care for them, but the 72-hour time frame has not been met in many cases because of the influx. This doesn't mean the undocumented minors will necessarily be allowed to remain in the country long term – while in DHS custody, removal proceedings are started

against them, according to officials – although some might be allowed to stay based on immigration judges' decisions.

The government is increasing its staff and adding more beds to facilities that house unaccompanied minors, NBC reported this week. The administration also requested additional funding from Congress. Senate Democrats are working to increase funding for HHS to deal with unaccompanied minors, and additional funding for DHS may also come.

A complaint filed Wednesday by human rights groups alleges that border patrol agents have refused to provide diapers to infants, have made threats, strip-searched and shackled children, and have denied them medical care. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske told reporters at the press conference that he had ordered an investigation into those complaints. But he also praised border agents for their work in handling the crisis, saying some have gone so far as to bring in their own children's clothing for the unaccompanied minors.

"They are absolutely committed to making sure that these children are being treated not only in the most respectful and humane way, but frankly, the most loving way," he said.

Johnson: Illegal Border Crossers Remain Priority For Deportation

[Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), June 13, 2014

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson warned Thursday that people caught illegally crossing the U.S. border are priorities for deportation, even as thousands of children are doing so to flee poverty and violence in Central America.

"Those apprehended at our border are priorities for removal," Johnson told reporters at a Washington news conference "They are priorities for enforcement of our immigration laws, regardless of age."

Johnson also announced several initiatives the Obama administration is pursuing to halt the influx of migrant children:

- The government is searching for additional space to process and shelter the children, who are mostly coming from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. The government is already reserving space at three military bases to care for them.
- The U.S. Coast Guard is loaning aircraft to transport the children to U.S. shelters. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is leasing two additional charter planes to help.
- The Red Cross is providing blankets and "hygiene kits" for the children.

- Johnson is discussing the crisis with ambassadors from the Central American countries and Mexico, specifically regarding their "shared border security interests and faster repatriation." He plans to continue the talks in Guatemala during a visit there next month.

- The government has “surged” federal law enforcement officers to combat human smuggling on the border.

“As I testified to Congress yesterday, this is a problem of humanitarian proportions in the Rio Grande Valley sector,” Johnson said.

The government doesn’t keep state-by-state statistics, so it is unknown precisely how many of these children are ending up in Georgia. But local immigration attorneys say they have noticed a substantial increase here since last year.

DHS Details Aid Being Given To Immigrant Children

By Alicia A. Caldwell

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) — Homeland Security Secretary Jeh (Jay) Johnson says the government is giving humanitarian aid to immigrant children caught trying to cross the Southern border illegally without their parents. But he says it’s dangerous for families to send their children unaccompanied to America.

Johnson told reporters Thursday that children are being cared for humanely as the Obama administration scrambles to handle the spike in young border crossers traveling alone.

More than 47,000 children have been apprehended at the Mexican border since the start of the budget year in October. Most are from Central America.

Johnson says it’s not safe for children and there is no free pass for young immigrants who try to cross the border illegally.

He says the government is not doing anything to encourage illegal immigration.

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U.S. In Talks With Central American Officials About Immigrant Children

By Cindy Carcamo And Rebecca Bratek

[Los Angeles Times](#), June 13, 2014

In an attempt to stem a crush of Central American children illegally crossing the United States alone into south Texas, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson announced Thursday that he was in contact with ambassadors in Latin America to discuss how to more quickly return those children to their home countries.

“Those apprehended at our border are priorities for removal,” Johnson said during a Washington news conference. “They are priorities for enforcement of our immigration laws regardless of age.”

Johnson, who said he was in discussions with officials in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico about faster repatriation, also announced several other strategies to

address the surge of unaccompanied children entering the U.S. illegally. Though illegal immigration overall has been down in recent years, a rise in the number of unaccompanied minors has taken authorities by surprise.

Through May, 47,000 children have entered the country alone this year. That’s already double from last year, and the number is expected to go high as 90,000.

Some of the initiatives announced by Johnson included beefing up staffing of federal officials to go after human smugglers and searching for additional facilities to temporarily house children who are fleeing primarily from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — countries with long-standing poverty and escalating violence.

Johnson said that increase correlates with an overall rise in illegal immigration into the Rio Grande Valley of southern Texas. Most of those migrants are from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

Johnson’s announcement came just as two state attorneys general — from Texas and Arizona — issued public letters to Johnson with several demands.

Texas Atty. Gen. Greg Abbott requested \$30 million from Homeland Security to pay for state resources that can be rushed to the Texas border. The Border Patrol is “overwhelmed,” he said, and needs the assistance quickly.

“With the Border Patrol’s focus shifted to this crisis, we have grave concerns that dangerous cartel activity, including narcotics smuggling and human trafficking, will go unchecked because Border Patrol resources are stretched too thin,” Abbott wrote.

Arizona Atty. Gen. Tom Horne’s letter addressed a separate surge of single parents with children illegally entering the U.S. in southern Texas. Unable to house the influx of families, federal immigration authorities have been taking them to Arizona, where they have been released at bus stations in Phoenix and Tucson under orders to report to an immigration official in the near future.

Horne threatened a lawsuit, demanding that Homeland Security “cease and desist” the practice.

“There does not appear to be any lawful authority for such arbitrary and injurious actions,” Horne said. “To the contrary, given that transporting an alien under these circumstances would be a federal crime ... if done by a citizen, it is far beyond the federal government’s discretionary authority to detain or release a removable alien under Title VIII of the United States Code.”

Homeland Security officials did not immediately comment on Horne’s letter.

At the news conference, Johnson did say that federal officials were doing their best to address the immediate needs of what he called a “problem of humanitarian proportion in the Rio Grande Valley sector.”

Johnson took the opportunity to warn people against coming to the U.S. illegally, stating that they are not eligible

for immigration relief under legislation before Congress. Nor are the newcomers eligible, he said, for an Obama administration deferred-deportation program that gives immigration relief to youth who came to the United States as children and stayed illegally.

Johnson, who said he first learned about the increase in unaccompanied minors last fall, also sent a special message to parents thinking about smuggling their children into the country.

"Of those who may have children in Central America that they want to reunite with ... illegal migration is not safe," Johnson said. "Illegal migration through the south Texas border is not safe. A processing center is no place for your child. Putting your child in the hands of a criminal smuggling organization is not safe."

U.S. Cautions Central American Parents Against Sending Children Alone To Border

By By Alex Dobuzinskis

[Reuters](#), June 12, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Unaccompanied Migrant Kids Flocking Over Border

[USA Today](#), June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON — The only way unaccompanied immigrant children in the United States will be allowed to stay here is if they can find a parent in the country, Homeland Security Jeh Johnson suggested in a news conference Thursday.

"The law requires that we act in the best interests of the child," said Johnson in a news conference. "Often that means reuniting the child with parents or family in the U.S."

Johnson spoke as the number of unaccompanied immigrant children being held in federal detention facilities is growing. Earlier this week, federal officials estimated that at least 1,000 children would be sent to a makeshift way station set up in a Border Patrol detention facility in Nogales, Ariz.

More than 47,000 unaccompanied child migrants have crossed the border in 2014, Johnson said. Most in the Nogales facility are from either Honduras, Guatemala, or El Salvador. Since these countries don't border the United States, the federal government cannot deport the kids right away. They must be turned over to HHS after three days.

HHS must provide adequate housing, food and health care for the children, Johnson said, while the department looks for family members living in the United States who can take them in. Federal law gives Hondurans and Salvadorans temporary protected status in the United States, meaning they can work here but not stay permanently.

The laws will not encourage more children to cross the border, Johnson said, because "they won't get a path to citizenship and it's not safe for children to be in the hands of smugglers."

Johnson said the number of unaccompanied children makes a comprehensive immigration bill more necessary.

"We need immigration reform because it includes money for better border security," he said. "And we need better border security."

By year's end, 70,000 to 90,000 unaccompanied children are expected to cross the border compared to only 24,000 in 2013. The U.S. government has spent more than \$126 billion over the past nine years on border security and enforcement. But most of that money has been put toward areas in California, Arizona, and West Texas. This year's migrants are entering mostly through the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas.

No Legal Status For New Migrant Children

[Arizona Republic](#), June 12, 2014

There is no guarantee of citizenship or legal status for the thousands of unaccompanied migrant children who have attempted to enter the country in recent months, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson insisted today.

"Those who cross borders today illegally, including children, are not eligible for an earned path to citizenship," Johnson said during a press conference.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is a program for children brought to the U.S. illegally by their parents before age 16. They are commonly referred to as "dreamers." DACA status is only available to immigrants who have lived continuously in the U.S. since 2007 and meet other requirements. Deportation proceedings against dreamers are deferred and they are eligible to work in the United States.

A comprehensive immigration reform bill approved by the Senate last year, but stalled in the House, could include a path to citizenship, but only for those who entered the country before December 2011.

The Southwest's border has been overwhelmed by a surge of unaccompanied minors crossing into the U.S. in recent months. Many of those have been shipped to Arizona because of overcrowding at facilities in Texas, where most were apprehended. As of Wednesday, more than 1,000 migrant children are being housed in a federal detention facility in Nogales, Ariz., officials said, waiting to be processed.

Mark Greenberg, an official with the Department of Health and Human Services, said the agency was steadily increasing its capacity to handle migrants but has been overwhelmed in recent months.

"What has happening in this most recent period is the numbers, particularly since the beginning in May, have grown

at a pace beyond what we predicted and beyond what Homeland Security had predicted,” Greenberg said at the press conference. “That’s what has caused this most recent set of challenges.”

The number of unaccompanied migrants apprehended so far this fiscal year is 92 percent higher than the previous year.

Johnson said officials have turned to a variety of sources to accommodate the influx of migrant children. Examples include the Red Cross, which has provided blankets, and the Department of Defense, which has offered military bases as temporary facilities for hundreds of child migrants.

Critics have expressed concern that housing the migrant children provides an incentive for more to cross the border.

Johnson said federal law requiring children be transferred to the care of Health and Human Services and eventually a parent’s custody or foster care is not an incentive to cross.

“We provide a number of things for children when we find them because the law requires it and because our values require it, but it is not safe, it is not a desirable situation,” Johnson said.

Children processed through the system are required to appear for removal proceedings, whether they are released to parents in the U.S. or to foster care. Johnson said the federal government has revived a media campaign warning foreign parents and children about the dangers of crossing the border.

“Our processing centers – and a number of us have seen them ourselves – are no place for children,” Johnson said. “To put a child into hands of criminal smuggling organization is not safe either.”

Officials are also working with representatives of the government in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico to address border security and faster repatriation, Johnson said.

“Family unification for a child is something that is critical, so I want to see every child with a parent who is able to take care of them, and the law requires that we do what is in the best interest of the child and that is what we’re doing,” Johnson said.

Johnson urged Congress to consider the influx of young immigrants when drafting the budget proposal for next year and when considering comprehensive immigration reform.

“If Congress acts, we know our immigration law landscape for years, if not decades, and so there is a lot of anticipation about what comprehensive immigration reform would do,” Johnson said.

Unaccompanied Kids: U.S. Wants Faster Removal

[WDIV-TV Detroit](#), June 13, 2014

America’s “urgent humanitarian situation” begins with a 15-year-old girl from El Salvador who spent 25 days on buses with her younger brother, traveling to the U.S. border.

She and the brother, 12, entered the United States illegally by crossing the Rio Grande River into Texas, and the law caught them a half hour later, the girl told CNN in an interview.

What happened next is when their – and the nation’s – real problems began.

The siblings are part of a rising tide of unaccompanied migrant children – mostly from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras – that’s so great that U.S. facilities can’t accommodate them all, estimated to total 60,000 this year, federal officials said Thursday.

Federal agencies announced they are stepping up efforts to return the influx of children to home countries.

The 15-year-old girl said the U.S. government wanted to separate the siblings by sending her brother from Texas to San Francisco, but the girl spoke up and said no – unlike other siblings who were separated because they feared taking a stand against U.S. officials.

But the siblings couldn’t use the bathroom in the adult facility in Texas because cameras watched them from the front and behind, she said. The food was awful. And they slept on a bare floor, without blankets. The children used plastic bags or someone’s rag to cover themselves, said the teen, whose name is being withheld because she is a minor.

Finally, the U.S. government moved the youngsters together to a California Health & Human Services Agency shelter.

“We didn’t suffer there,” the girl said in an interview, with her immigration attorney. “They gave us clothes, food and a bed, and everything.”

Department of Homeland Security officials couldn’t be immediately reached for comment about the 15-year-old girl’s claim, but Secretary Jeh Johnson told reporters Thursday that, in general, it was “hazardous to send a child into South Texas to a processing center and a number of us here have seen them ourselves, (they) are no place for children.”

In disaster-like mode

On Thursday, U.S. officials addressed this rising tide of unaccompanied migrant children and pledged to use a framework typically used in disasters to ensure the minors are safely detained.

In addition to deploying the Coast Guard and military to transport and help house the undocumented youths, Johnson is talking with the ambassadors of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico to discuss “faster repatriation,” he said.

More immigration judges will be assigned for speedier removal proceedings, he said.

While Johnson suggested that unaccompanied minors are rushing to the border to take advantage of a deferred-deportation U.S. policy, the 15-year-old girl stated a dramatically different motivation for her perilous journey: violence in her home country. She and her brother left El Salvador on March 5.

"The reason I came is because we were in danger over there," the girl said. "My mom and dad said we were better off coming here, that's all I can say."

Lindsay Toczylowski, an immigration attorney with the Los Angeles immigrant rights group Esperanza, said her agency's interviews with more than 1,000 undocumented minors found Central America violence as the reason behind children daring to illegally enter the United States alone or with siblings.

"The levels of violence in central America is really big and there's a crisis," said Toczylowski, who is also an attorney for the girl and her brother.

U.S. law toward Central American minors

Johnson said that three-fourths of the unaccompanied children crossing the border come from three Central American countries: Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Federal law requires different treatment for undocumented minors from those nations.

Those minors aren't immediately deported, unlike those from Mexico or Canada.

Rather, the Central American minors are turned over to the U.S. Department Health and Human Services within 72 hours of DHS taking them into custody.

The Central American children then may end up in the care of their parents or relatives now living in the United States, and the immigrant is given a court date. But very few actually show up, and the children often become some of the millions of undocumented immigrants, said a union official for U.S. Border Patrol agents.

In fact, U.S. officials found U.S.-based relatives for the 15-year-old El Salvadoran girl and her 12-year-old brother. The siblings were placed in the relatives' care in the Los Angeles area about three weeks ago, the girl said.

With the influx of undocumented children like the 15-year-old girl, U.S. authorities have developed a placement system.

Minors At Border Will Go To Health And Human Services

By Patrick Gillespie

[McClatchy](#), June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON — A surge of unaccompanied children crossing the United States border in southwest Texas are not eligible for any amnesty or path to citizenship and are being

transferred to the custody of the federal Health and Human Services Department, said U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson at a news conference Thursday.

Johnson said the goal of the federal government is to act "in the best interest of the child," but also emphasized that the children are subject to deportation. "Those who cross our borders today illegally, including children, are not eligible for an earned path to citizenship," Johnson said. "Those apprehended at our border are priorities for removal. They are priorities for enforcement of our immigration laws regardless of age."

If the minors aren't sent home, they could be transferred to long-term foster care or potentially reunited with family members, Johnson said. When asked whether undocumented parents living in the United States could claim children who already crossed the border and not face deportation, Johnson said children are frequently reunited with their parents, but did not clarify whether the family is then deported.

"HHS acts in the best interest of the child, which very often means reuniting that child with a parent," Johnson said.

Tens of thousands of unaccompanied children, mostly from crime- and corruption-ridden countries such as Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, have crossed the United States border since the start of 2013, causing what President Barack Obama has described as an "urgent humanitarian effort."

Mark Greenberg, acting assistant secretary for the administration for children and families with the Department of Health and Human Services, estimated that 60,000 of these children could cross the border this year. Over 24,000 unaccompanied children crossed the border in 2013.

The influx of unaccompanied children exceeded the capacity and resources of patrol stations in Texas, and some Central American immigrants have been flown to Phoenix, Ariz., to receive temporary lodging.

A multi-department effort is attempting to transport the unaccompanied children from Customs and Border Protection custody to facilities that coordinate with HHS. Some facilities are state-owned places operated by non-profit organizations, Greenberg said.

Also Thursday, Customs and Border Protection Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske said the agency would investigate complaints regarding allegations of border agents abusing unaccompanied minors crossing the border. Kerlikowske did not go into detail about the complaints. He also did not comment on other allegations regarding the deaths of people shot by agents near the nation's border with Mexico.

Kerlikowske praised the border agents who are dealing with the surge of youth.

"In my multiple trips with the border patrol agents, I have been watching them do absolutely heroic efforts,"

Kerlikowske told reporters. "They're absolutely committed to making sure that these children are treated not only in the most respectful and humane way, but frankly the most loving way."

Child Immigrants 'priorities For Removal'

By Benjamin Goad

[The Hill](#), June 13, 2014

The Obama administration said on Thursday that thousands of illegal immigrant children pouring into the United States are "priorities for removal."

The move comes as Obama officials laid out a suite of healthcare, housing, legal and even family reunification services they are providing to the youths.

Republicans have blamed an explosion in the number of unaccompanied illegal children on the president's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, through which deportations have been halted for thousands of younger illegal immigrants.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson sought to make clear that an estimated 47,000 children who've flooded across the Southwestern border this year, many escaping violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, are not eligible for relief.

"Those apprehended at our borders are priorities for removal ... regardless of age," Johnson said, before urging family members to stop sending, or sending for, their children via illegal means.

"Illegal migration is not safe," he said, later adding, "your child will not benefit from DACA now."

Johnson also detailed a government-wide response to the influx of unaccompanied child immigrants, which showed that 2014 numbers had almost doubled last year's total of 24,000 by the end of May.

Military bases in Texas, California and Oklahoma have been designated as processing centers for the children, with transportation aided by aircraft borrowed from the U.S. Coast Guard.

Charities, including the American Red Cross, have supplied blankets and hygiene kits, Johnson said.

The children are to be given health screenings and access to legal representation. While many are sent into group home situations, some can be re-unified with family members in accordance with existing protocol, he said.

Johnson pushed back, however, on assertions that the services act as an incentive for families to send their kids illegally over the border.

"The law requires that we act in the best interest of the child," he said, adding that sometimes means placing them with family.

Johnson said the administration is intent on slowing the torrent of unaccompanied illegal immigrant youths into the United States. The government is repressing a public

information campaign designed to educate citizens of other nations about the dangers of illegal immigration.

The secretary said he is also in talks with officials in foreign countries about ways to address the problem, and would travel to Guatemala this summer.

"We must do something to stem this tide," he said.

Homeland Security To Probe Border Child Abuse Allegations

By Stephen Dinan

[Washington Times](#), June 12, 2014

Homeland Security officials announced an investigation Thursday into charges that Customs and Border Protection officers abused some of the young children surging across the U.S. border, as the government continued to struggle to get a handle on the burgeoning problem.

Department Secretary Jeh Johnson issued a stern message to parents thinking of sending their children to make the journey from Central America to the U.S., telling them the trip isn't safe and their children won't be eligible for legal status under either President Obama's non-deportation policy or under the Senate's immigration bill.

"Illegal migration through the south Texas border is not safe. A processing center is no place for your child. Putting your child in the hands of a criminal smuggling organization is not safe," he said. "I am not encouraging in any way, shape or form, illegal migration. That's the message."

However, at a press conference that left many unanswered questions, he refused to say whether illegal immigrant parents in the U.S. who try to collect their children will be subject to deportation, saying only that under American law the government tries to reunite families.

The surge of children — estimated to reach more than 90,000 this year, and more than 140,000 next year, according to an internal draft memo — has left Homeland Security officials struggling to please both sides in the immigration debate.

Arizona's attorney general wrote a letter Thursday demanding that Homeland Security stop shipping the children and other illegal immigrants from Texas, where most are crossing, to his state.

Tom Horne said there is no legal basis for the transfer and said he is looking to see whether he can sue the federal government.

Meanwhile, immigrant rights groups argue the children should be given better treatment and, in many cases, say humanitarian concerns should earn them the right to stay.

Advocates also filed a complaint this week with Mr. Johnson protesting the treatment of some of the children while in the care of Customs and Border Protection.

The complaint details dozens of stories from children who say they were denied food or water, insulted or

threatened by officers, denied the chance to make an asylum claim or even physically abused. The names were provided to the agency for follow-up investigation.

Customs and Border Protection Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske told reporters he signed an order to start the investigation, but also said the agents he's seen have been going beyond the call of duty.

"In my multiple trips with the BP agents, I have been watching them do absolutely heroic efforts, not only rescuing children but taking care of them way beyond some of the skill sets. They are doing everything from mixing formula to bringing in their own children's clothing," Mr. Kerlikowske said.

"It takes a toll on those agents, a human toll. But they are absolutely committed to making sure these children are treated in not only the most respectful and humane way, but also the most loving way," he said.

Mr. Johnson said charities have stepped up to help the children, with the American Red Cross providing blankets and hygiene kits, and the Texas Baptist Men providing shower trailers.

The secretary also said he's sent more investigators to the border to target smuggling organizations that are facilitating the surge, and has reinstated a public relations campaign in English and Spanish in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the three main countries responsible for the surge, pleading with parents not to make the journey or send their children alone.

Officials To Investigate Reports Of Mistreatment Of Minors Caught Crossing Border

By Julia Preston

[New York Times](#), June 12, 2014

Border officials opened an investigation on Thursday into claims by legal aid groups that border agents were mistreating unaccompanied minors caught crossing the Southwest border illegally.

At a news conference in Washington, the commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, Gil Kerlikowske, said he had ordered internal investigators to examine a complaint filed Wednesday by five legal groups. The complaint was based on interviews with 116 youths, in which they reported being deprived of food and medical care while in Border Patrol holding cells. Some reported physical abuse.

Mr. Kerlikowske's announcement was a break from past practices for the agency. In recent years, the agency has rarely confirmed investigations of complaints of misconduct by border agents or reported actions resulting from them.

Border authorities are dealing with a humanitarian crisis as over 47,000 young migrants without their parents, mainly from Central America, have been apprehended since October

crossing illegally. President Obama has ordered the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate an effort to provide shelters and help the youths reunite with family in this country.

The complaint of abuse was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona and the National Immigrant Justice Center in Chicago, among other groups. Mr. Kerlikowske, while pledging to respond, also offered a defense of "absolutely heroic efforts" by Border Patrol agents handling the detention of the youths.

"Agents are doing everything from mixing formula to bringing in their own children's clothing, and taking care of these kids in a multitude of ways," Mr. Kerlikowske said. "They are absolutely committed in making sure that these children are treated, not only in the most respectful and humane way, but frankly, in the most loving way."

Officials also sought to dispel criticism from Republican lawmakers that they are encouraging young people to migrate by allowing them into the country, placing them in shelters and delaying their deportation.

An internal Border Patrol report, based on interviews on May 28 with 230 Central American migrants detained in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, said the main reason they cited for coming was they had heard rumors that the American authorities were giving, only until the end of June, a special entry "permit" to unaccompanied minors and women traveling with children.

Jeh C. Johnson, the secretary of Homeland Security, said the authorities were required to transfer unaccompanied youths, in accordance with "the best interests of the child," to Health and Human Services, the federal agency that runs shelters where they receive basic medical care and some education. Health officials must also make efforts to reunite minors with family members in this country.

But the officials said the young migrants remain in deportation proceedings after they have been released to family, and must attend immigration court hearings and comply with judges' rulings. As recent illegal crossers, they are priorities for deportation.

Mr. Johnson said parents here illegally should not be encouraged to send for their children. "Illegal migration through the South Texas border is not safe," he said. "I'm not encouraging in any way shape or form illegal migration, that's the message."

In Arizona, the attorney general, Tom Horne, demanded in a letter on Thursday that Homeland Security officials stop transferring women with their children who were detained in Texas to that state, or he would sue. In recent days, hundreds of those migrants have been released without assistance at the bus station in Phoenix.

Mr. Johnson told Congress on Wednesday that since June 1, mainly unaccompanied minors, rather than women with children, were being transferred for processing to

Arizona, and that the minors would not be released in the state.

Obama's DHS Chief Threatens Migrant Flood If GOP Rejects Amnesty Bill

By Neil Munro

[Daily Caller](#), June 12, 2014

Department of Homeland Security chief Jeh Johnson suggested Thursday he would not block the growing wave of illegal immigrants who are crossing the Texas border until the GOP agrees to pass the Senate immigration rewrite that is backed by President Obama.

He twice refused to set any limit on the number of foreign youths who would be given the opportunity to ask the administration's immigration judges for permission to live in the United States.

Johnson and several deputies delivered the threat to GOP legislators during a brief June 12 press conference.

The threat was offset by statements likely intended to reassure Americans who are worried about border security, but was backed up by repeated signals of support to Latino families who may want to send their children north in the hope they will be given permission to stay in the United States.

Border police will have an easier time dealing with the rising wave of migrant youths if the House accepts the Senate's huge and complex immigration overhaul, Johnson warned.

The new law would add extra resources "as well as stability in the law right now," Johnson claimed.

"If Congress acts, I believe we would know our immigration law landscape for years, if not decades," he said.

The Homeland Security chief made that claim even though the Senate's huge bill creates sweeping changes to long-established immigration laws, and those changes have yet to be tested in the courts.

GOP leaders have blocked the Senate's unpopular bill, which would double the annual flow of 2 million guest-workers and immigrants into the United States.

But Obama has relaxed immigration laws so much that a flood of youths and families from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador are crossing the border in the hope of winning the administration's permission to stay. Agency officials expect the flood to reach 90,000 by October, and 140,000 in the following 12 months.

The flow has grown rapidly, and media outlets are now saying that 1,000 people are crossing the border each day. If that rate continues, the inflow by October would exceed 150,000.

Almost one in five of the 28 million people living in the three Central American countries would like to migrate to the United States, according to a 2013 Gallup survey.

That adds up to a potential inflow of five million people, assuming the flow is not augmented by roughly 130 million additional people in other countries that Gallup estimates wish to live in the United States.

The inflow will grow the nation's labor supply, even as millions of older Americans have given up looking for work, and millions of younger Americans can't get a decent job to start a family or buy a house.

Roughly one in eight American men — or 10 million men — between 25 and 54 do not have full-time jobs, partly because the country imported 10 million guest-workers and 13 million immigrants from 2000 to 2013.

In 2013, Obama only allowed officials to deport 0.2 percent of the 12 million illegal immigrants living in the United States who had also not broken other laws. This month, he announced plans to renew a 2012 youth-amnesty program that has already awarded work permits to more than 540,000 illegal immigrants.

Johnson and several deputies pitched the three discordant messages during the short press conference, which was held in a small, windowless room without any wireless connections in a federal building.

The officials only answered a few reporters' questions.

Officials refused to say how many adults are crossing the border, or to reveal the number of youths who have already been given permission to stay.

Some media reports, based on leaks from actual border officers, say that two-third of the illegal immigrants are adults — with or without children — even though the administration is justifying its lax policies by saying the border crossers are young, unaccompanied children.

Johnson did not say how many of the border-crossers are older teenagers, but he did say he allocated more resources to help border-crossers after he met a 10 year-old girl who said she was looking for her father.

Officials also declined to say if any or all of migrant youths would be deported via scheduled deportation proceedings.

As Johnson left the short press event, reporters complained loudly that officials did not offer needed information about the rising wave of illegal immigration.

Johnson combined his hardball political threat to the GOP with a brief soundbite that is likely intended to reassure Americans who worry that Obama is not trying to control the border.

"I'm not encouraging in any way, shape or form illegal migration, that's not the message," he said, revealing his p.r. priority.

But that TV-ready message for American voters was overshadowed throughout the conference by the mixed messages he offered to Latino parents seeking to send their youths to live in the United States.

The mixed message may be a political balancing act for Obama, who wants to spur Latino turnout in the 2014 election, but does not want the growing wave to frighten away swing-voters.

For example, he also offered some perfunctory warnings to parents who are considering sending their children to live in the United States.

"To those who may have children in Central America... illegal migration is not safe, illegal migration is not safe, a processing center is no place for your child," he warned parents in the United States and in Central America.

He also warned youths that they were not eligible for Obama's 2012 "Deferred Arrival for Childhood Arrivals" 2-year amnesty "You are not eligible for DACA treatment or the "Earned Path to Citizenship" in the [amnesty and immigration] legislation," passed by the Senate last July," Johnson declared.

But he did not say if Obama would oppose changes intended to include the new border-crossers.

But even as he warned parents about the danger of the trip, he repeatedly said that foreign children would be helped by the U.S. government once they cross the border.

He repeatedly said that federal law requires the U.S. government to act in the best interests of the foreign child, and he declined to acknowledge or set any limits on the U.S. government's duty to foreign youths.

Once the youths cross the border, "our goal is to quickly and safely transport the children... into a safe and secure environment that is in the best interests of the children pursuant to the requirements of the law," he said.

Unaccompanied youth and children are being fed and cared for, he said.

He said he has acquired extra aircraft to transport the youths from the border to boarding facilities, and said they're getting "mental health" care and health-checks ups, he said.

Illegal immigrants who are living in the United States, said one of Johnson's deputies can send a "family friend" to pick up their children from the government's processing centers.

The answer came in response to a reporter from a Spanish-language media outlet, who said that illegal-immigrants are concerned they may be arrested and deported when they try to pick up their children from the government center.

Moreover, Johnson did not announce any significant effort to stem the flow northwards.

He said he would fly to Guatemala to meet with top government leaders. But he said he would make that flight in the middle of next month, and he did not announce any plans to meet with top leaders in El Salvador or Honduras.

He did not announce any new partnership with Mexico to block the flow of migrants through Mexico.

He did not say if President Barack Obama would urge parents to not send their children northwards. He did not say if Obama would rule out changes to current regulations barring the newly arrived youths from using his 2012 "Deferred Arrival for Childhood Arrivals."

Instead, Johnson said that the border-crossing youths would be required to go through routine immigration law courts. In fact, he suggested they could be allowed to stay by immigration law rulings.

The immigration court judges that make those rulings are appointed by Obama.

In the last several days, White House spokesman Josh Earnest has twice suggested that youth would be allowed to stay.

"These unaccompanied minors... are going through the immigration process to determine how to return them to their home countries or to otherwise handle their immigration status," Earnest said on June 10.

The "otherwise" phrase could include the granting of permission to stay.

Border Children Crisis Complicated By Parents Here Illegally

By Suzanne Gamboa

[NBC News](#), June 12, 2014

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson left unclear Thursday what happens to parents illegally in the country when they show up to claim their children who have arrived alone.

Johnson's response demonstrated the delicacy of the issue the administration has on its hands. While officials have openly discussed its response to vulnerable children, talking about how many of those children ultimately get to stay here and how it deals with parents here illegally that are reunited with their children is more difficult.

"I am not encouraging in any way shape or form illegal migration. That's the message," Johnson said. The Department of Health and Human Services is required under the law to act in the best interest of the child, Johnson said.

The law that Johnson is referring to is a sweeping anti-trafficking law that aims to prevent children who arrive alone from being returned to serious danger, such as being targeted by drug cartels or to an abusive home. The U.S. also is party to international agreements aimed at protecting children.

About 47,000 children have arrived so far this year and most are from Mexico so they are immediately returned. But those from noncontiguous countries, in this case El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, must be sent to a shelter and attempts made to unite them with a relative or sponsor while they await hearings on whether they should be deported or allowed to stay.

"Our duty is to get the child to a sponsor. While they are with the sponsor they are still subject to removal," said Mark Greenberg, acting assistant secretary for HHS.

Parents are required to get children to deportation proceedings and cooperate with the removal proceedings, he said.

But a reporter from Telemundo, which is part of NBC, said parents who are not legally in the U.S. don't know if they are qualified to pick up their children who have followed them to the U.S. and what happens to them if they do.

Some critics have said the crisis of the children's arrivals is "administration made" because Obama granted the deferred deportations to DREAMers and because of the push for immigration reform.

Johnson emphasized that the newly arriving children do not qualify for deferral of deportation as do some young immigrants here illegally, also known as DREAMers, because that only applies to youth who have been living in U.S. continuously since June 15, 2007. Johnson also said the path to citizenship in the Senate-approved immigration reform bill applies to people who have lived here before Dec. 31, 2011.

Although he learned about the escalating numbers of children arriving at the border before his confirmation hearing, Johnson said it was made more vivid when he visited the McAllen, Texas, processing center on Mother's Day and asked a 10-year-old girl, 'Where is your mother.' "

"She responded, 'I don't have a mother. I'm looking for my father in the United States.' I returned to Washington the next day determined to do something about this situation," Johnson said.

In addition to creating the shelter and beefing up processing centers, as reported by NBC Thursday, Johnson listed other efforts to respond to the crisis:

- The American Red Cross is providing blankets and hygiene kits.

- Children are receiving health screenings at the Border Patrol centers, before they are released to shelters.

- Faith-based groups are assisting, for example, Texas Baptist Men provided shower trailers.

- Johnson has met with ambassadors of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador about border security to stem the flow and plans a trip to Guatemala.

- DHS restarted a public affairs campaign to warn of the dangers of sending kids over the border and particularly with smugglers.

- Johnson said he called for a southwest border security plan to address security and fill the gaps.

Johnson said the crisis brings home the need for comprehensive immigration reform, not only provide resources for border security but also "stability" to immigration laws.

He said his review of immigration enforcement policies requested by President Barack Obama is ongoing and he does see need for improvements.

Pressure Mounts Against Child Immigrant Detention

By Astrid Galvan, Associated Press

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) – The Obama administration came under increasing pressure Thursday from Arizona politicians over its immigration policies as hundreds of immigrant children caught crossing the border illegally are being sent to the state at a converted warehouse in Nogales.

Attorney General Tom Horne threatened legal action Thursday against the government. Republican Sens. John McCain and Jeff Flake demanded that Customs and Border Protection allow reporters into the Nogales facility. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer has also been highly critical of the policy and demanded that the government stop sending children to the state.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske addressed some of the criticism at a news conference in Washington, saying children are being treated humanely and that there is no free pass for young children or anyone else caught trying to cross the border.

"I have been watching them (Border Patrol agents) do absolutely heroic efforts," Kerlikowske said. "Not only rescuing children but taking care of them, way beyond some of the skill sets. They are doing everything from making formula to bringing in their own children's clothing to taking care of these kids in a multitude of ways."

In a letter to Johnson, Horne demanded the agency immediately stop transferring adult migrants and families from Texas to Arizona. He also asked for the Department of Homeland Security to provide the total number of immigrants sent to Arizona and what steps border agents took to ensure they were healthy and lacking a criminal record.

The U.S. has seen a huge surge in immigrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador crossing the border into Texas, driven in part by violence in their homeland.

More than 47,000 mostly Central American unaccompanied children have been caught illegally crossing the Mexican border into Texas since October. That's left border agents in Texas overwhelmed and unable to process so many children. Within the last week, more than 1,000 of them have been transferred to a warehouse in Nogales, where they are being processed before being sent to shelters in various states and then reunited with family members.

Border Patrol also came under fire last month after dropping off hundreds of women and children who were caught crossing the border illegally into Texas at Tucson and

Phoenix Greyhound stations. They are then told to report to immigration authorities within two weeks.

Horne wants to know how immigration officials are keeping track of the women and children who were released at Greyhound stations in Tucson and Phoenix during the last week of May.

"Not only were these inadvisable and irresponsible actions done without notifying Arizona officials, but DHS has yet to explain why it is apprehending aliens in Texas, moving them some 1200 miles and simply releasing them in our state," Horne said while "demanding that it immediately stops."

Media agencies have been denied access to the facility, but border agents have let in lawmakers, religious groups, activists and politicians.

Many of them have provided accounts of what they saw.

Santa Cruz County Sheriff Tony Estrada says he was surprised at how well-run the facility was.

"They're well-taken care of. It's incredible the job they've done in such a short time that they have had with this situation," Estrada said.

The Rev. Sean Carroll, who heads the humanitarian organization Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, toured the facility on Wednesday.

"Physically, most looked like they were in good condition, adequately clothed and were having their basic needs met. At the same time, we were not allowed to speak with them, so it was difficult to assess how they were doing psychologically and spiritually," Carroll wrote in a summary of his visit.

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AG Tom Horne Threatens To Sue Feds Over Migrant Shipments

[Arizona Republic](#), June 12, 2014

Arizona Attorney General Tom Horne on Thursday threatened a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security over shipments of hundreds of undocumented families, adults and children to the state, while giving federal officials "a reasonable amount of time" to cease the practice.

If the practice continues, Horne warned in a letter to the department, he may work with other state agencies to sue federal officials but did not define what he deems a "reasonable amount of time." State statute prevents Horne from suing the federal government directly, his office said, but he is "aggressively pursuing all options," which may include working with state counterparts, which can bring a lawsuit.

Horne, the state's top prosecutor, cited the federal government's potential violation of federal statutes in a formal letter to the Department of Homeland Security and orders them to stop "abandoning" men, women and children in Arizona or face a potential lawsuit. His letter cites potential violations of statutes that require federal officials' "duty to control and guard the boundaries and borders of the United States against the illegal entry of aliens," and another statute that states transporting an undocumented immigrant under their busing practice "is far beyond the federal government's discretionary authority to detain or release a removable alien under Title 8 of the U.S. Code.

The DHS began transporting hundreds of undocumented immigrants from southern Texas to Arizona over Memorial Day weekend and released them at Greyhound bus stations in Tucson and Phoenix. DHS officials have said the Border Patrol didn't have the manpower to handle a surge in undocumented immigrants from Central America crossing the border illegally in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Last week, the federal government began sending hundreds of unaccompanied children caught crossing the border illegally in Texas to a holding center in Nogales, Ariz.

Many Arizona officials are outraged over the practice, including Horne, Gov. Jan Brewer, Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery, state lawmakers and local officials. State officials complained that DHS did not let them know about the practice before the immigrants arrived; they also raised concerns that the migrants were being dumped at the bus stations in searing heat and without water, food and other basic necessities.

"DHS has yet to explain why it is apprehending aliens in Texas and releasing them in Arizona," Horne's letter read. "There does not appear to be any lawful authority for such arbitrary and injurious actions. To the contrary, given that transporting an alien under these circumstances would be a federal crime under 8 U.S.C. § 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) if done by a citizen, it is far beyond the federal government's discretionary authority to detain or release a removable alien under Title 8 of the United States Code."

The letter continues, "These aliens are not being transported for purposes of detaining them in a federal facility located in Arizona. Rather, DHS is inexplicably moving them some 1200 miles and simply releasing them here (outdoors in temperatures exceeding 100 degrees) rather than in Texas."

Horne, like Brewer and other public officials, asked DHS to provide information about the shipment practice, including: the number of immigrants transported to Arizona and left at bus stations since May 1; steps DHS took, if any, to ensure immigrants were inoculated against communicable diseases and did not need medical treatment; steps taken to determine no immigrants were convicted criminals or were engaged in human trafficking at the time of their apprehension; steps DHS took to determine if the immigrants

had access to enough resources to avoid exploitation; and steps DHS is taking to monitor immigrants' whereabouts and to ensure they will report to Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices for processing.

On Wednesday, Horne's office said it secured an agreement with federal officials to inspect detention centers in southern Arizona, where migrant children are being housed. Stephanie Grisham, an attorney general spokeswoman, said Horne is assembling a team of inspectors who expect to travel to the facilities and examine the conditions early next week.

Busing Immigrants To Arizona Illegal, Threatens Lawsuit

[Arizona Daily Star](#), June 13, 2014

PHOENIX — Saying the busing is illegal, state Attorney General Tom Horne threatened today to sue federal officials for dropping off undocumented individuals they apprehended in Texas in Tucson and Phoenix.

In a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, Horne said he can find no legal authority "for such arbitrary and injurious actions." In fact, Horne said transporting illegal immigrants for any purpose other than to federal facilities violates the law.

Beyond that, Horne contends that moving the undocumented individuals from Texas to Arizona violates federal law which requires Johnson's agency "to control and guard the boundaries and borders of the United States against the illegal entry of aliens."

Horne's move came just as Johnson was detailing for the media the efforts his agency is making to deal with the separate but related problem of the flood of unaccompanied minors who also have been picked up crossing the border into Texas.

Johnson insisted that his agency is doing what it can, as quickly as possible to process the children and turn them over to the Department of Health and Human Services. He said that agency provides a "safe and secure environment."

He did not specifically address the allegations made Wednesday by immigrant rights groups that there is "systemic abuse" of children who come into the custody of Customs and Border Protection.

But, in a warning to parents not to send their children to the United States, he said that a processing center for those who enter the country illegally "is no place for children."

CBP Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske, speaking at the same news conference in Washington, promised that the allegations will be investigated. But Kerlikowske praised what he said have been the "absolutely heroic efforts" of his officers to deal with the unexpected surge in border crossings.

Meanwhile, Gov. Jan Brewer was scheduled to send a staffer to Nogales today to check on conditions there where unaccompanied children, brought in from Texas, are being temporarily kept until they are turned over to Health and Human Services.

But Brewer also used the problem to send out an email today to not only sign a petition to the president to express outrage over immigrants being bused to Arizona but also to solicit donations to Jan PAC, her federal political action committee which paid for the message.

Migrant Kids In Arizona Are All Right

[Arizona Republic](#), June 12, 2014

Immigrants' rights groups, the American Civil Liberties Union and Republican officeholders all expressed concern Wednesday for unaccompanied immigrant children who have flooded across the border in recent months, but the consul general from Guatemala in Phoenix said conditions at a Nogales, Ariz., detention facility where hundreds are being temporarily housed have improved.

A representative of Gov. Jan Brewer's office will visit the facility today to review the conditions.

The office of Attorney General Tom Horne announced Wednesday it made an agreement with several federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to inspect the Nogales facility. Department of Homeland Security officials could not be reached to confirm the agreement.

Maricopa County Attorney Bill Montgomery said at a press conference he sent a letter to Immigration and Customs Enforcement threatening legal action if the agency violated Arizona child-abuse laws.

The children were apprehended in Texas, then sent to Arizona for processing because the Rio Grande Valley Sector has been overwhelmed, officials said.

But despite their concerns, Jimena Díaz, the Guatemalan consul general in Arizona, said conditions are improving since she toured the detention center last week.

She noted several problems she saw earlier, including Guatemalan children who became ill after eating unfamiliar wheat burritos.

"We have to be there if something is not good, we have to talk to the authorities," Díaz said.

She said she has continued to monitor the situation, and as of Wednesday, the conditions are much better.

The children now have some beds and daily access to showers. Corn tortillas, a staple of the Guatemalan diet, have been requested, she said.

Over 1,000 youths were held at the detention center, Díaz said, the majority from the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. About 500 will be transferred out of the facility by the end of the week, she

reported, noting that some of them were being shipped to a military base in Ventura, Calif.

Federal law requires unaccompanied migrant children be transferred to Department of Health and Human Services custody after 72 hours. Then they are placed at shelters maintained by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The surge of immigrants has filled Phoenix-area shelters to capacity. About 1,600 kids are distributed among eight shelters in Phoenix, Díaz said.

She said the non-profit organization Southwest Key recently opened a shelter in Mesa and is working to open another in Tucson.

Díaz said the Guatemalan government has not sent any funding to aid Guatemalan immigrants in the U.S., but the consul's office is helping children secure birth certificates and connect with family.

About 47,000 unaccompanied minors have been apprehended at the border this fiscal year, already a 92 percent increase from the previous year, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The Rio Grande Valley sector in Texas posted the largest increase, 148 percent.

The majority, 75 percent, are from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

As detention centers fill, immigrants' rights groups claim many children are mistreated in the care of CBP officials.

The ACLU and several other groups filed a complaint Wednesday detailing alleged mistreatment of 116 unaccompanied immigrant youths between the ages of 5 and 17 nationwide during the past year.

Children reported being held in frigid cells, deprived of food and water, verbally threatened, physically abused and denied medical care.

"We believe thousands of children have been subject to these conditions and that while the surge in number of unaccompanied minors exacerbates this problem, it's a pre-existing problem that we feel the Department of Homeland Security has probably been aware of," said Joseph Anderson, director of litigation for Americans for Immigrant Justice, which contributed to the report.

Alleged incidents include a 17-year-old mother and her 1-year-old daughter who were denied food and diapers for three days, and a 13-year-old girl who had several asthma attacks after her medicine was confiscated.

The groups called on DHS to enact immediate change, including creation of short-term detention standards, a uniform complaint process and immediate termination for anyone who mistreats children in CBP care.

"These are very deep-seated problems," said James Lyall, a staff attorney with the ACLU in Arizona. "There is a well-established culture of abuse and impunity in this agency and this is only the latest indication of that."

CBP issued a statement in response to the report, emphasizing the agency's commitment to caring for young immigrants in their custody.

"CBP continues to use all available resources to care for unaccompanied children while in CBP's custody, working with our partner agencies to move them as quickly as possible to appropriate facilities," spokesman Michael Friel wrote in an e-mail.

The root cause for the surge of children crossing without adults is not entirely clear.

Erika Pinheiro, an attorney at the Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project in Los Angeles, which helped compile the accounts of children in the complaint filed with DHS, said, "Most of the young boys included in this complaint had received death threats for their refusal to join or cooperate with gangs in their home countries or have been victims of by gang violence."

Girls experienced threats of violence and sexual assault, she said.

Immigrant advocates who spoke at the Guatemalan consulate in Phoenix said family reunification is the basis for children migrating to the U.S.

"This is a humanitarian situation that these people want to be with their families," Antonio Velazquez said in Spanish through a translator. Velazquez is president of the Maya Chapin Organization of Guatemala in Arizona.

California Migrant Kids Shelter Could Soon Fill

[Associated Press](#), June 12, 2014

PORT HUENEME, Calif. — The converted warehouse on a Southern California military base that once housed sailors preparing to deploy overseas is now plastered with posters of X-Men and Green Lantern and filled with migrant teens eating applesauce and chatting about World Cup soccer.

The cavernous facility at Naval Base Ventura County known as "Building 267" is one of three shelters set up by federal government officials to house hundreds of Central American children caught entering the country illegally following a surge in border crossing. And while beds in the sleeping quarters are still crisply cornered, the blankets are now pink and turquoise, with teddy bears on top of some of the pillows.

During a tightly controlled tour Thursday in Port Hueneme, a government official said the number of teens housed at the 42,000 square foot facility could more than triple to 575 by early next week. The official could not be named as a condition of the visit, and no photos or video were allowed.

Federal authorities have also set up a shelter at a military base in Texas and are planning another for Oklahoma to cope with what they have described as an "urgent humanitarian situation." More than 47,000 children, mostly

from Central America, have been apprehended at the Mexican border since the start of the budget year in October.

In California, bunk beds and extra dining tables await the newcomers. Dirt soccer fields were created for outdoor play, and many are excited to watch World Cup matches on television, a shelter supervisor said.

Reporters were not allowed to speak with the children, who range in age from 13 to 17.

During their stay, the teens were learning long division in math class and drawing in art. Lunch was pizza bread, Caesar salad and applesauce served on brown disposable plates and eaten under white tents outdoors.

Each child is assigned a bunk bed and locker. Girls and boys are housed separately in sparsely decorated quarters hung with pictures made by the children or of superheroes. In the classroom areas, posters feature the president and American icons such as Rosa Parks.

The facility has air conditioning but officials haven't needed to use it yet, and children bathe in individual showers.

After their arrest on the border, the children are transferred to HHS' custody and placed at a shelter until case workers find a relative or sponsor to care for them and ensure they attend immigration court hearings on government efforts to deport them.

Martha Arevalo, executive director of the Central American Resource Center in Los Angeles, said children fleeing dire situations and enduring a perilous journey to the United States should be housed in warm, personal settings where they feel safe — not a detention-style or military environment.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said Thursday there is no free pass for children or anyone else caught trying to cross the border illegally.

"I am not encouraging in any way, shape or form illegal immigration," Johnson said.

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Central American Migrants Overwhelm Border Patrol Station In Texas

By Nick Miroff And Joshua Partlow

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

MCALEN, Tex. — Behind the beige brick facade and the barbed wire of the Border Patrol station here, crowds of Central American women and children are sleeping on concrete floors in 90-degree heat.

The sick are separated by flimsy strips of yellow police tape from the crying babies and expectant mothers. They subsist on bologna sandwiches and tacos, with portable toilets and no showers, and their wait can last for days.

These are examples of the detention conditions, captured on a surreptitious video obtained by The Washington Post, that prompted President Obama to declare a "humanitarian crisis" this week, as illegal migrants, including thousands of women and children, stream into south Texas. Every day, hundreds of Central American migrants, in groups as large as 250 people, are wading across the muddy Rio Grande and turning themselves in to the Border Patrol as helicopters and speedboats with mounted machine guns patrol the river.

Fleeing gang violence and poverty, and driven in part by the belief that Central American women and children will not be deported, many of the migrants are not trying to sneak into the country but are crossing in plain sight.

The spike in numbers over the past three months, particularly of children traveling without their parents, has overwhelmed the Border Patrol's detention centers in South Texas, prompting authorities to ship young children to converted warehouses and military bases as far away as California. Obama has pledged \$2 billion to construct temporary housing and has ordered the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to take charge.

In the past eight months, Customs and Border Protection has detained 47,000 unaccompanied minors, most of them in the Rio Grande Valley area of South Texas, up 92 percent from the same period in the previous fiscal year.

"We're fighting a losing battle right now," said Chris Cabrera, the Border Patrol's union representative here. "We don't have anywhere to hold them."

Across the river in the drug cartel-run Mexican border town of Reynosa, migrants from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala sleep on bunk-beds in church-run shelters, as they prepare for the culmination of dangerous journeys by bus and train that have often taken them weeks to finish.

Fany Yaneth, 25, a single mother of four, hitchhiked for three weeks. Tuesday, she waited in a sliver of shade in a shelter courtyard with dozens of others. In her violent home town of Choluteca, Honduras, where she milled flour and shared her mother's apartment with three families, "you can't walk in the streets," she said. "They'll kill anyone."

The next morning, she said, she would be taking her 7-year-old daughter and her 17-year-old brother and presenting herself to the Border Patrol.

"What we're hearing is that the Americans are helping Hondurans right now. And even more for women and children. I don't know if it's true," she said. "This is what I want to do. I'm going to arrive at the bridge, to walk up to American immigration and hold out my hand."

Unlike illegal migrants from Mexico, who can be quickly processed and returned by bus to Mexican border cities, Central Americans cannot be easily shipped home. Airplanes must be chartered. Consular arrangements must be made. And if migrants request asylum in the United States, the U.S.

government has the additional responsibility to determine whether their appeal is based on a legitimate need for protection and a "credible fear" of persecution in their home countries.

More than 36,000 migrants, the majority from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, requested asylum along the southwestern border during the government's 2013 fiscal year, nearly triple the 2012 number. Ultimately, most of the applications were denied, but critics of the process say migrants are gaming the system to extend their stays in the United States. Others may simply go underground and ignore deportation orders if their petitions are rejected.

"I guess when you advertise \$2 billion of assistance to help out the cause, it's an open invitation for anybody to come across," said Lazaro "Larry" Gallardo Jr., a constable in Hidalgo County, as he stood along the Rio Grande riverbank.

His deputies said they were picking up children as young as 4 without their parents and other children with Hello Kitty backpacks, cellphones and the telephone numbers of U.S. relatives on note cards.

The cellphone video obtained by The Washington Post shows dozens of women and children sprawled on concrete floors. According to a person who provided the video and has first-hand knowledge of the facility, the migrants wait for days, sometimes more than a week. A makeshift quarantine for detainees with scabies is cordoned off with strips of yellow tape. Another separates those with chicken pox.

Immigrant advocacy organizations and human rights groups filed an administrative complaint this week on behalf of more than 100 children who say they were denied proper care and physically abused in U.S. government custody. The children were subjected to racial insults, deprived of diapers and other necessities, and held in squalid detention facilities for extended periods, the complaint alleges.

Asked about the living conditions for migrants in the Border Patrol stations, Customs and Border Protection spokesman Michael Friel said his agency is "ensuring nutritional and hygienic needs are met." The children receive "meals regularly and have access to drinks and snacks throughout the day," he said, adding that there is medical care and that "facilities include toilets."

In a statement, Friel said the Border Patrol does "everything within its power" to process the children within 72 hours and transfer them to the Department of Health and Human Services, as required by law.

The video, whose contents were confirmed by Border Patrol agents, offers an up-close look at the daunting challenges facing FEMA, which has been tasked with coordinating a response to the crisis.

The McAllen Border Patrol station, where the video was recorded, has received as many as 1,300 migrants per day recently, far exceeding its capacity of fewer than 500. The crowding has forced Border Patrol officials to use the secure

garage area, or sally port, where passenger buses are typically unloaded, as a detention area.

In holding cells with one toilet, there are sometimes as many as 100 people, "covering every inch of floor-space," said one agent. Border Patrol officials here declined to make the facility available to Post reporters.

The flood of new arrivals has so overwhelmed border facilities that U.S. immigration officials have been flying families to cities in Arizona, where the illegal migrants are released and instructed to return for a court appearance. Hundreds of children are being held at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, as well as at Naval Base Ventura County in California and Fort Sill in Oklahoma. They are also being sheltered in a converted warehouse in Nogales, Ariz. FEMA plans to repurpose another warehouse in McAllen to house the children, according to local agents.

On Monday, Roger Omar Garcia Chavez, 29, a Honduran at a shelter in Reynosa, said he had sent his wife and 2-year-old daughter across the river four days earlier and planned to sneak across himself and meet up with them in Houston.

"Women with children are going north," he said. "What I'm sure of is that pregnant women and children are being allowed in."

At the shelter the next day, he was gone.

Texas Asks Feds For \$30 Million To Secure Border

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) – Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott has asked the U.S. Homeland Security secretary for \$30 million so Texas can send more state troopers to the Texas-Mexico border to provide security while the Border Patrol is contending with an immigration surge.

In a letter Thursday, Abbott, Republican nominee for Texas governor, tells Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson that it would cost \$1.3 million per week for the state to launch a significant border security operation.

Abbott says organized crime is benefiting as Border Patrol agents deal with a humanitarian crisis of more than 47,000 unaccompanied children who entered the country from last October to this May.

Border Patrol agents have made more than 170,000 arrests in the Rio Grande Valley this fiscal year, more than double any other border sector.

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Abbott Demands \$30 Million From Feds For Border Crisis

By Susan Carroll And David McCumber

[Houston Chronicle](#), June 13, 2014

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott on Thursday asked the Department of Homeland Security to chip in \$30 million to help the state fill enforcement gaps caused by the federal government's response to the "extraordinary influx" of unaccompanied children crossing the Texas border.

"We have grave concerns that dangerous cartel activity, including narcotics smuggling and human trafficking, will go unchecked because Border Patrol resources are stretched too thin," Abbott wrote in a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson.

Also on Thursday, Arizona Attorney General Tom Horne threatened to sue the federal government in a letter to Johnson, formally demanding officials "cease and desist" releasing adult immigrants and their children caught crossing other stretches of the Southwest border at commercial bus stations in Arizona.

The detainees are given instructions to report to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement office within 15 days of their release.

"DHS's actions pose significant health and safety risks both for the people DHS abandons and for the communities in which they abandon them," Horne wrote.

Peter Boogaard, a DHS spokesman, said the department would respond directly to Horne, adding that some immigrants detained by Customs and Border Patrol are being transferred to immigration officials "where appropriate custody determinations will be made on a case-by-case basis, prioritizing national security and public safety."

At a news conference in Washington, Homeland Secretary Johnson responded defensively when he was asked whether services provided to the unaccompanied children in U.S. custody are drawing more of them north across the border.

"We provide for these children because the law requires it and our values require it," he responded. "But it is not a safe situation, and I would not recommend that any parent send their child through this process."

Diplomatic approach

Regarding the thousands of parents and children traveling together, who have been released with notices to appear for immigration hearings after being processed by the Border Patrol, Johnson said, "We do track the whereabouts of those who are given notices to appear. There are ways to do that."

He also said those apprehended at the border, including minors, were "priorities for removal."

Johnson announced several other measures, including a "90-day surge" of 60 more federal investigators in Houston and San Antonio to ramp up investigations and prosecutions of human smuggling organizations, and the preparation of more facilities to house unaccompanied minors.

He said he would go to Guatemala himself next month, and would meet with the ambassadors from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to discuss the situation.

Overwhelmed agency

Since the situation reached a crisis level, DHS officials assigned hundreds of personnel from across the country to the Texas border, but the number of Central and South American immigrants entering the country through the Rio Grande Valley climbed far beyond projections.

In the first eight months of the fiscal year, agents in south Texas recorded more than 160,000 apprehensions, eclipsing the total in all of last year. Apprehensions of unaccompanied children climbed to more than 47,000, more than two thirds of them – some 33,000 – in the Valley.

The influx caused a processing logjam that left thousands of unaccompanied children stuck in chilly, overcrowded Border Patrol processing stations for days. By law, immigration officials are supposed to hand over children from countries other than Mexico to the Office of Refugee Resettlement within 72 hours.

But top officials acknowledged that, despite efforts to speed up processing, they frequently miss that mark because of the overwhelming numbers of unaccompanied children entering the detention system.

President Barack Obama has tapped the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate humanitarian relief efforts, including housing, transportation and medical care. The government has resorted to using three military installations to house an overflow of unaccompanied children, including an air force base in San Antonio.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement, also overwhelmed by the influx, typically holds unaccompanied children in a network of shelters and other facilities until they can identify a relative or other sponsor in the U.S. that will take custody of them while their immigration case is pending.

The vast majority, some 90 percent, is placed with a sponsor while they wait to hear the outcome of their cases, up from about 65 percent a few years ago, before the influx started.

Family unification

Johnson defended placing the children when possible with relatives already living in the United States, regardless of the family member's legal status.

"Family unification for a child is something that is critical," he said. "The law requires that we do what is in the best interest of the child. Very often that requires reunifying the child with parents in the United States."

Abbott, a Republican, said Texas Department of Public Safety officials are ready to step in and assist the federal government with border enforcement, estimating it would cost about \$1.3 million a week for overtime, lodging and fuel to "stem the tide of unauthorized entries across the porous U.S.-Mexico border."

Abbott joined GOP colleagues in blaming the Obama administration for the influx, writing that the “crisis has been accelerated” by the U.S. policies that reunite unaccompanied children with relatives in the U.S.

Releases condemned

DHS officials stressed that unaccompanied children caught at the border would not be eligible for the federal government’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program that offers temporary protection for deportation and a work permit to children who arrived in the U.S. in 2007 or earlier. The immigration reform measure considered by Congress only applies to people who arrived on or before Dec. 31, 2011, he added.

Abbott’s criticism dovetailed with Horne’s, who blasted a federal government practice highlighted by the recent influx: releasing tens of thousands of parents and children caught crossing the border in Texas at public bus stations across the Southwest.

“These aliens are not being transported for purposes of detaining them in a federal facility located in Arizona,” Horne wrote. “Rather, DHS is inexplicably moving them some 1,200 miles and simply releasing them here (outdoors in temperatures exceeding 100 degrees) rather than in Texas.”

Central American Minors Face Danger Crossing Into USA

[USA Today](#), June 12, 2014

MEXICO CITY — Wilfredo Filiu Garay left Honduras with his 16-year-old son in 2010. They made it to Veracruz state on Mexico’s Gulf Coast, where they were kidnapped and beaten until their relatives scraped together a \$3,000 ransom.

Filiu lost his left leg on a subsequent trip through Mexico, falling under the wheels of a northbound train known as “La Bestia,” or the Beast, used by migrants to steal rides to cross Mexico.

He tries to discourage would-be migrants – many of them minors – from starting such treacherous treks, but it’s difficult. Poverty and violence prompts many young Central Americans to abandon home and head to the USA.

“They don’t care about the risks,” Filiu, 47, says on a recent visit to Mexico City. “They care about the American dream.”

Migrants such as Filiu have long streamed out of Central America in search of a better life. A recent surge of unaccompanied minors arriving in the USA has immigration officials struggling to process the cases and figure out where to put them.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection reports detaining 47,0147 unaccompanied children at the Mexican border from October 2013 through the end of May. President Obama recently called the situation a “humanitarian crisis” and

announced plans to temporarily house and care for young detainees on military bases.

Mexico has seen a similar increase and detained 9,893 minors last year, most of them from Central America, according to the migration advocacy group Sin Fronteras.

Slowing the stream of Central American migrants seems unlikely, experts say, especially since staying put presents bigger problems, such as criminals charging extortion and gangs forcibly recruiting youth into their ranks. Honduras has the world’s highest murder rate: 90.4 per 100,000 persons, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

“The majority are leaving because they’ve been threatened or persecuted by gangs ... not for economic reasons,” says Alberto Xicotencatl, director of a migrant shelter in Saltillo, 195 miles south of Laredo, Texas.

Some leave Central America to reunite with family in the USA. Poverty pushes others. Low pay in countries such as Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala prompts some to make the long journey, while many communities survive on money sent home by migrants working in the USA, says Germán Calix, a priest who is the Honduras director of Caritas, the Catholic Church’s charitable arm.

“A young person that can get to the United States can buy a property” back in Honduras after working two or three years, Calix says.

Reaching the U.S. border requires crossing Mexico, where protections are minimal and criminal groups prey upon Central Americans without the proper papers.

Xicotencatl says an increasing number of Central Americans he helps opt to take advantage of voluntary repatriation programs offered by Mexico — sending migrants home without being charged with any offenses — rather than risk being kidnapped after heading north into the lawless state of Tamaulipas that borders Texas.

Still, he has entire families “with babies in their arms” stop at his shelter in increasingly bigger numbers.

“They’re seeking refuge in the United States,” he says.

Immigrant Parents Urge U.S. Officials To Help Their Children Flee Central American Violence

By Pamela Constable

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

Two months ago, Lucy Cabrera’s adolescent son and daughter called her from Honduras in tears. They said gangs had threatened to kidnap them and they begged her to help them flee to the U.S. She borrowed \$6,000 and wired the money to a series of guides in Guatemala and Mexico. On Saturday, her kids called again — from a U.S. detention facility in Arizona. This time, there were no tears.

“Thank God they are safe now. It all happened so fast,” said Cabrera, who sells homemade tortillas in the District.

Although she is an illegal immigrant, she said she has been contacted by federal authorities so both children can eventually be released to her custody. "It's truly a miracle," she marvelled.

American officials are scrambling to manage and understand the mass exodus of unaccompanied minors from Central America who have turned up at the southern U.S. border over the past few months. The surge has overwhelmed detention facilities, forcing the Obama administration to take emergency measures to provide shelter, hire lawyers and locate sponsors to receive the children.

The number of such minors entering the U.S. has crept upwards since 2011, and last fall it began to skyrocket. Since October alone, 47,000 have arrived; officials expect another 60,000 by the end of this year. The new surge is partly seasonal, with early summer the easiest time to travel across the region.

But it is mainly being driven by two other factors. One is an epidemic of gang violence across El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala that has put many children at risk, especially when parents are not there to protect them. The second is a perception, fueled by certain U.S. policies and by critics of the Obama administration, that the government is treating young illegal immigrants with unprecedented leniency.

As a result, thousands of parents like Cabrera sense both an urgent need and a unique opportunity to be reunited with children they left behind years ago, fleeing conflict or seeking a better life. With no legal means to import their children from abroad, many of these undocumented families are putting their hopes in an unexpected source of salvation: the U.S. immigration system.

Driven by a mix of rumor, fact and political hyperbole, word has spread through Latino communities in the Washington area and elsewhere that if their children reach the U.S. border alone, they will be allowed to go free.

The families' hopes are partly justified, because officials have speeded up processing the new arrivals to relieve crowded shelters and release as many as possible to relatives or guardians. Unlike children from Mexico, who can be sent back across the border right away, the law allows minors arriving from more distant countries to be sheltered and then handed over to a sponsor while awaiting court hearings.

The greater Washington region, with more than 400,000 residents of Central American origin, is one of several metropolitan areas in the U.S. where the newly arrived minors are most likely to be sent. Social and legal aid agencies said they have helped hundreds of families petition to receive minors from border detention over the past year.

But the speculation that these minors simply will be set free is unfounded. All of them are subject to deportation, and none are eligible for the administration's so-called "Dream

Act" program, which allows some illegal youths to remain if they have lived in the U.S. for at least five years and can meet a list of other requirements. The newcomers, in contrast, are ordered to appear in immigration court and have no guarantee of being allowed to stay.

"The fact that they arrive in the U.S. and are released doesn't give them any legal status at all," said Wendy Young, a lawyer in the District for Kids in Need of Defense, a nonprofit group that provides free legal help for such minors. Some are eligible for special visas or legal protection, such as victims of abuse or trafficking, but Young said at least 60 percent do not qualify and eventually are ordered deported.

"This is not a slam dunk," she said.

Senior administration officials sought to reinforce that message in a teleconference with journalists this week. They said their humanitarian concern for children fleeing "extraordinary violence" in Central America does not change the legal requirement to place them in "removal proceedings," as with adults who enter the country illegally.

The temptation, of course, is that families whose children face deportation may simply hide them away, shuttling them among friends and relatives in different states. On the other hand, parents or guardians must supply immigration officials with detailed information about themselves in order to receive a child from government custody, making such evasion more difficult.

Before they even reach the United States, children face extreme hazards while traveling across Mexico and trying to cross the border. Smugglers often rob, abuse and abandon them; girls are sometimes raped. But more and more divided families are calculating that the risk is worth it. Once the children reach the border, some parents are instructing them to surrender to once-feared U.S. Border Patrol agents as soon as they can.

Susana, a factory worker in Fredericksburg, Va., said she heard last month that minors would be "saved" and let go if they reached the United States. She said she paid \$2,800 for guides to bring her daughter, 15, from Honduras across Guatemala and Mexico — where they were expected to "throw her in the river." The girl was quickly picked up by U.S. agents and is now in a federally-run secure shelter in Texas.

"She was only five when I left her, and she has suffered a lot. Everyone was saying this is the time to send for your kids, the government is letting them go, so I decided to do it," said Susana, an illegal immigrant who asked that her full name not be used.

Susana said her daughter calls her often from the shelter, where she shares a room with six other girls and takes English classes. Meanwhile, social workers have sent Susana lists of questions and documents to fill out while she readies a bedroom for the daughter she has not seen in a decade. "They want to know about my income and my house and what school she will go to," Susana said. "They say I

should be patient and not to worry, soon I will be her guardian.”

Some undocumented parents, reluctant to allow their children to travel alone, have tried to go home and accompany them back — with disastrous results. Last winter, a house cleaner in Hyattsville, Md. saved up as much money as she could and returned to El Salvador for her two teenaged daughters, who were being abused by male relatives and harassed by gangs.

According to the woman’s mother, the smugglers demanded more than she could pay, and she was worried about the three younger children she had left back in the United States. So in March, she reluctantly left her older girls behind once more and tried to sneak back into the States. She was caught at the border and now is in federal detention in Texas, unable to care for any of her children.

Even when long-separated families are successfully united, they often face daunting adjustment problems. There are stepfathers and younger siblings the newly arrived teenagers have never met. There are language barriers and old feelings of anger, jealousy and abandonment. There are crowded apartments and long workdays that offer little chance for special attention. And often, there are the added tensions and uncertainty of the parents being illegal, too.

“In many cases, things turn out to be a disaster,” said Dilsia Molina, a counselor at La Clinica del Pueblo in the District who helps dozens of immigrant women with family problems. “I tell all the women that when a child arrives from home after a long time apart, it is like getting pregnant and giving birth all over again.”

Young said she worries that the speeded-up screening process will miss potential problems with sponsors, such as histories of abuse or crime. For example, she noted that proposed guardians are no longer being required to provide fingerprints. “We are not pro-detention, but this does create concerns,” she said.

Another problem is the lack of lawyers available to represent arriving minors who may qualify for deportation relief, asylum or special visas. The White House announced this week that it is setting up an emergency program with funds for about 300 lawyers, but Young said far more are needed.

One Salvadoran woman in Prince George’s County left her daughter as a small child a decade ago. Last year, the budding adolescent was sent north by grandparents who feared she would be abused by gangs. In Texas, scared and abandoned by smugglers, she turned herself into the Border Patrol; after several months in custody, she was sent to live with a mom she barely knew.

“She seemed more like a sister than a mother,” said the girl, now 14, who can manage only a few words of English. The mother, a store cashier, sat close to her on a sofa, looking pensive as the daughter recounted her ordeal in the

desert. Both face possible deportation, but both clearly cherish their new relationship. “I was desperately worried about her, but it was definitely worth the risk,” the mother confided with a shy glance at the girl. “She is everything to me.”

Illegal Immigration Dilemma: Are Migrant Children Refugees Or Criminals?

By Patrik Jonsson

[Christian Science Monitor](#), June 12, 2014

The growing crush of vulnerable migrant children crossing the Rio Grande and entering the US through south Texas has put urgency to a vexing question for the US immigration system:

Are children fleeing Central American violence refugees who need asylum or illegal gold-diggers who need to go home?

The rush on the border has created what the White House and many others have called a humanitarian crisis. But it has also pushed Washington into finger-pointing mode, with politicians and commentators trying to pin down why children, often guided by “coyote” smugglers, are traveling hundreds of miles across Mexico into the US.

The massive border breach by “unaccompanied alien children” has been building since 2012, going from 6,560 in fiscal year 2011 to an estimated 90,000 this year, and a possible 150,000 in 2015. Of those, as many as two-thirds should qualify as legitimate refugees because their fears of persecution in their home countries – whether from gangs or political factions – seem to be well-founded, according to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Whether they will be is an open question for America’s unique asylum system, where protection-seekers can now linger for years before a judge determines whether they face a reasonable fear of persecution or violence in their home country.

The UNHCR, in a February report, claimed most of the children are fleeing violence and political persecution in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, the country with the highest murder rate in the world, according to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime. The report also notes that the bulk of asylum-seekers aren’t coming to the US, but instead seeking protection from countries like Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua.

In the US, however, the influx of young migrants – and images of crowded detention facilities – comes amid a potent and divisive national debate about immigration reform and what it means for American security and the economy. That pits humanitarian needs against politics.

“The key here is that this is an opportunity for us to step up and stick to American principles and traditions of being a

nation that accepts refugees, that protects human rights, and enforces our laws that say we will provide asylum to people that meet the criteria," says Michelle Brané, who directs the Women's Refugee Commission's migrant rights and justice program. Opposing that are "gut responses that say, 'How do you stop all these kids from getting into the US?' and claims that the US border is too open and too lax and too welcoming of these populations."

In 2003, federal care for unaccompanied children crossing the border was moved from the law enforcement branch of the former Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Department of Health and Human Services. Since then, the US has taken extra care when looking at asylum requests from unaccompanied minors. A 2008 human trafficking law also added protections.

But recent reports from the UN and the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies in San Francisco suggest that child asylum-seekers, especially those who come alone, should be afforded greater protections, as well as better representation. For example, current law doesn't mandate children receive a lawyer to argue their case.

The US is a signatory to a 1951 UN refugee treaty that says anyone who crosses the border and shows signs of being at risk cannot be sent back until their circumstances have been investigated thoroughly.

"We're not dealing with groups of people here who are not entitled to US protection," says James Hathaway, the director of the Program in Refugee and Asylum Law at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. "Quite the contrary, we're dealing with a population that actually seems to in very large measure qualify for protection that we offered to provide by signing the UN Refugee Convention."

But there remains skepticism among many citizens, lawmakers, and federal immigration judges about the true roots of the migration – which could strengthen if the crisis deepens. Many say the children are not as much fleeing as being drawn by rumors that the Obama administration will protect child migrants. By letting more child border-crossers stay in the US, it would create incentive for more illegal immigrants to try their luck on the US border, they argue.

They note that the current surge began in 2012, when President Obama signed an executive action that allowed undocumented immigrants who were brought to the country as minors to defer deportation proceedings for two years. Last week, the administration announced plans that would allow these immigrants to defer their deportations a further two years.

None of the unaccompanied minors crossing the border illegally now would qualify. Mr. Obama's actions apply only to undocumented immigrants who came to the US before June 15, 2007. But coyotes won't care about the finer details.

"Word has gotten out around the world about President Obama's lax immigration enforcement policies and it has

encouraged more individuals to come to the United States illegally, many of whom are children," Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R) of Virginia, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said in a statement.

Those concerns could further impact an asylum system that Professor Hathaway says is "clearly one of the worst" in the world. "So the concern that [what appears a crisis on the border] can have negative ramifications on asylum-seekers is probably well founded."

Border Detention Of Children Shames America

By Ruben Navarrette, Cnn Contributor

[CNN](#), June 12, 2014

San Diego, Calif. (CNN) – Where did our country go? Americans are known around the world as a good and compassionate people – with a soft spot for children.

And, although you wouldn't know it from watching a ghastly detention drama currently playing out in the Southwest, law enforcement and the legal system have built-in safeguards that acknowledge the simple fact that children are different from adults, and thus cannot be treated the same.

The Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement seem to have forgotten that. These agencies are currently warehousing hundreds of children from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador who have, in recent months, streamed across the Texas-Mexico border.

According to media reports, the group is a mixture of unaccompanied minors sent by their parents, toddlers traveling with their mothers, and children who are alone and trying to reunite with their parents in the United States.

These youngsters are a long way from home and many appear to have gotten this far by jumping aboard passenger trains that run from the Mexico-Guatemala border to the northern cities of Mexico, and then joining up with "coyotes" (smugglers) who brought them across or, in some cases, merely pointed the way.

Once they arrived, they were taken into custody by U.S. immigration officials. According to immigration attorneys who represent some of these children, many are being held in freezing holding cells intended for fewer inhabitants and shorter stays. These aren't jail cells as much as temporary holding rooms nicknamed "hieleras," or ice chests. CNN has reported that the border facilities lack "enough food, beds or sanitary facilities to provide for the children."

These are the lucky ones. Federal immigration officials have loaded hundreds of others on buses and transported them across state lines, only to drop them at bus stations in states like Arizona with nothing more than a notice to appear before an immigration judge – a scribbled piece of paper representing a feeble attempt at accountability, which most of

these people are likely to ignore as they wander off and fade into society.

President Barack Obama called it “an urgent humanitarian situation requiring a unified and coordinated federal response.” And Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said his department other agencies would work together to ensure a “rapid government-wide response in the short-term and to undertake broader, longer-term reforms to address the root cause behind these recent migration trends.”

Anyone still think the border is – as President Barack Obama and other administration officials have repeatedly assured us – more secure than it ever has been?

It's a mess. U.S. officials don't have the faintest idea of what to do with the influx, even though they had advanced warning that this crisis was coming.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry told radio host Sean Hannity this week that public safety officials in his state had informed the federal government about a surge of unaccompanied minors crossing the border as early as 2012. The Department of Homeland Security appears to have not adequately addressed the problem. And now, with more than 1,000 children coming across the border every day according to government reports, it must.

Why are they coming? They're fleeing countries like those in Central America that are quite literally falling apart, with little or failed infrastructure in the military or law enforcement, and thus unable to fend off encroachment by Mexican drug cartels looking for new outposts from which to operate.

That is the best theory about why the surge is occurring.

The most far-fetched theory comes from restrictionists and nativists who insist that what enticed these children from Central America to cross the U.S.-Mexico border is an expectation that Obama is poised to use his executive power to grant a kind of “amnesty” to millions of undocumented.

If people in Central America believe that, they could be the only folks in this hemisphere who do.

Obama has never been particularly interested in proposing an immigration reform plan to Congress. And he has spent the last few years resisting calls to use executive power to act unilaterally to stop deportations.

House Majority Leader Eric Cantor had taken just about every position one can take on the immigration issue, but recently said he would work with Obama to allow undocumented young people to stay in the United States. Now that has been defeated in the primary election by a conservative in his home district in Virginia, immigration reform is all but dead.

Besides, from all appearances, the border kids aren't immigrants. They're refugees. They're here because they couldn't be anywhere else, and they had no choice but to

come. We're supposed to take in people like this, and offer them safe haven.

This country has a right to protect its borders, and to decide who enters and who doesn't. But once our officials apprehend and take custody of a group of people – let alone a group of children – they're responsible to do right by them. That isn't happening in the Southwest.

We have standards, and procedures, and hoops to jump through for those who might claim refugee status. We don't just drop human beings at a bus station, and run in the other direction. There are nations that would handle a situation like this in such a cowardly manner. This isn't one of them.

So where did our country go? And how do we get it back?

Editorial: Humanitarian Crisis Adds To Immigration Complications

[Albuquerque \(NM\) Journal](#), June 13, 2014

A tsunami of desperate Central Americans, many of them women and unaccompanied children, is washing up on the U.S.-Mexico border just as sufficient numbers of U.S. elected officials seem to have lost the political will to address immigration, likely closing any window of opportunity for reform at this time.

Overwhelmed, government immigration enforcement agencies are dumping thousands of these immigrants who were detained crossing the border illegally on the streets of U.S. border towns, or keeping them in military bases or holding centers.

And hoping volunteers and aid groups will step up and somehow take care of them.

Authorities report the number of non-Mexican immigrants picked up in Texas' southern Rio Grande Valley was nearly 97,000 in fiscal 2013 as poverty, lack of work and growing violence in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala are prompting thousands to flee to the north.

At the current rate, the government estimates that as many as 60,000 children traveling alone could be apprehended by U.S. border agents by the end of the fiscal year.

One woman, who was released in El Paso, told Journal reporter Lauren Villagran that extreme poverty drove her to leave Honduras with her three children and make the treacherous journey through Mexico and into south Texas.

She and several hundred other adults and children were flown by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to El Paso, where they were processed, given a court date and then let go. Volunteers in El Paso gave the woman and her children toiletries, clothes and shoes for one of her boys who had arrived barefoot.

In Arizona, federal and state authorities are scrambling to care for hundreds of unaccompanied migrant children transported there and being housed in a warehouse that lacks enough cots and basic necessities – because there was nowhere else to place them.

A window for tackling immigration reform seemed to be open in 2009 and 2010, when Democrats controlled the presidency and both chambers of Congress, but for political reasons nothing was done.

Since then, the impetus to do something has further lost steam and President Obama's administration has been busy deporting people in record numbers – and trying to pick up political points by blaming Republicans for not passing immigration reform.

Tuesday's primary election defeat of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R.-Va., who was accused by his opponent of being soft on immigration, could be the last sputter, at least for this Congress.

Meanwhile, border states are unfairly bearing the crushing pressure of dealing with what clearly is a growing national humanitarian crisis.

The United States cannot take everyone in. But it certainly isn't going to deport 12 million people. And it isn't inclined to simply turn away people who are in dire straits.

But ignoring the problem, as has been the case in Washington for far too long, won't solve it. It just allows the desperation to get worse and makes the odds for reform more complicated and less and less likely.

This editorial first appeared in the Albuquerque Journal. It was written by members of the editorial board and is unsigned as it represents the opinion of the newspaper rather than the writers.

Bergdahl Departs Germany For Treatment In Texas

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis And Eric Schmitt

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the American prisoner of war freed on May 31 in exchange for five senior members of the Taliban, left Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Thursday afternoon and will arrive in the United States early Friday to begin treatment at a Texas military medical facility, the Pentagon said.

It will be the start of the final phase of what military officials describe as a multistep healing and reintegration process for Sergeant Bergdahl, 28, who was held captive for nearly five years by militants. After his release to American commandos in Afghanistan, he received medical treatment and counseling at an American military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany.

"Our first priority is making sure that Sergeant Bergdahl continues to get the care and support he needs," Rear Adm.

John F. Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, said in a statement.

The process, likely to last weeks or longer, is expected to end with a carefully choreographed reunion with his parents in Hailey, Idaho. Military officials said Sergeant Bergdahl had had no direct contact with his parents since his release.

While military doctors at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center indicated this week that Sergeant Bergdahl was physically ready to return to the United States, some American officials questioned whether he was emotionally prepared to make the trip. Of particular concern, they said, were the potential mental effects of reuniting with his parents and media exposure upon his return.

As recently as Wednesday, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel told Congress that Sergeant Bergdahl was only beginning to recuperate from the trauma of his imprisonment and that his doctors "don't believe he's ready" to leave Landstuhl.

"This isn't just about a physical situation," said Mr. Hagel, a former Army sergeant who was wounded twice during some of the worst fighting of the Vietnam War. "This guy was held for almost five years in God knows what kind of conditions."

President Obama's decision to negotiate for the release of Sergeant Bergdahl in exchange for the Taliban detainees, who were being held at the American prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, ignited anger among members of Congress and critics who equated the freeing of the Taliban detainees to bargaining with terrorists. Lawmakers in both parties have objected to the move, saying Mr. Obama did not consult adequately with them about Sergeant Bergdahl's impending release.

The Obama administration bypassed a law requiring Mr. Hagel to give Congress 30 days' notice before transferring a Guantánamo detainee. It did so based on a signing statement issued by Mr. Obama that asserted that he could lawfully sidestep the requirement under certain circumstances.

Some members of Sergeant Bergdahl's former unit say he deserted by walking off his post, and they have reacted angrily to his release in exchange for the Taliban detainees. They have also argued that the lives of American soldiers were put at risk in the search for Sergeant Bergdahl.

Until Thursday, Sergeant Bergdahl was cloistered at the Landstuhl hospital without access to television or the Internet, officials said. But some details of his imprisonment by the Taliban have emerged, including accounts that Sergeant Bergdahl was held in a cage as punishment for one or two attempts to escape.

Sergeant Bergdahl is expected to arrive at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio and receive specialized treatment the military has devised for soldiers freed from

lengthy captivities. Many of the protocols the military has established for such patients were first developed during the Vietnam War, when prisoners of war returned to the United States in significant numbers.

In San Antonio, Sergeant Bergdahl will begin the last of three phases of what the military calls “post-captivity reintegration,” including specific steps to overcome the coping strategies that a captive may have developed to handle the trauma of being imprisoned, isolated and degraded. The reintegration can involve hundreds of people, including family members, members of a freed prisoner’s former unit, doctors and lawyers.

The process is likely to be complicated by the length and circumstances of Sergeant Bergdahl’s confinement, and the uproar over his release, said Dr. Frank Ochberg, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Michigan State University who specializes in post-traumatic stress disorder.

“He’s having to reorient himself,” said Dr. Ochberg, who is not involved in Sergeant Bergdahl’s care. “He’s becoming sane after having gone through a period in which his rationality was suspended. It’s going to take him time to find his rational mind, to make sense out of what is going on, and then to be able to communicate — first with his loved ones, and then with people who want to investigate him.”

As Sergeant Bergdahl began his journey back to the United States, more details surfaced about his departure in 2009 from his base in Afghanistan, which led to his capture. In two letters to his parents obtained by The Daily Beast, Sergeant Bergdahl complained about a lack of leadership in his unit and urged American officials investigating his case to reserve judgment until they had all the evidence. The letters were dated 2012 and 2013.

Taliban 5 In Bergdahl Trade Have Plenty Of Time To Rejoin Fight In Afghanistan

Fighting to continue after Americans leave

By Rowan Scarborough

[Washington Times](#), June 12, 2014

The five Taliban commanders freed by the Obama administration will find an Afghanistan in 2015 that is still home to nearly 10,000 American troops and still in a war that likely will go on for years.

President Obama says “America’s war in Afghanistan will come to a responsible end” when the last U.S. combat troops leave at the end of 2016, 2 years from now.

But what goes on, barring a peace deal, is war for the Afghan National Security Forces and the elected government, both trying to survive relentless Taliban who once ruled the country and want it back.

Analysts say this means the five senior Taliban released in exchange for Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl will have ample time to join the fight and replenish the enemy’s

leadership during and after the Americans and NATO personnel leave.

“Clearly, they do pose a threat because they’re going to be part of the leadership team again,” said retired Army Gen. John Keane, who served as an adviser to past commanders in Afghanistan. “The fact of the matter is they’re likely to be back in Pakistan with that leadership to influence future operations while the United States military is still there at least for a remaining year.”

Gen. Keane added that, although the five present a threat to U.S. personnel, “I don’t think it’s high-risk.”

The deal requires the five to remain in the Persian Gulf emirate of Qatar for one year. They can re-emerge on the battlefield in June 2015, when the U.S. will have a dwindling force of 9,800 troops that will shrink to 5,000 by year’s end. NATO also is expected to keep some European troops in country. Britain is now the largest European contributor, with 5,000 troops.

Rep. Howard P. “Buck” McKeon, California Republican and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said that “although there will be fewer U.S. personnel in Afghanistan in 2015, the return of these five Taliban leaders directly threatens the gains of our men and women who have fought and died.”

Stephen Biddle, a professor of international relations at George Washington University, said the point being lost in discussing the prisoner swap is that there is no sign the war is ending.

Mr. Biddle predicts the war will grind on until a settlement is reached or Washington cuts off funding for the Afghan National Security Forces.

“If the latter comes first, [which is] a distinct possibility, then the ANSF breaks up, the government fails, and U.S. war aims are lost,” he said. “The only meaningful alternative to that scenario is negotiation and settlement. Hence the right way to think about issues like prisoner releases is whether or not they facilitate progress toward settling a war that otherwise won’t end anytime soon.”

Did the deal move the U.S. in that direction?

“Not much. That’s my biggest problem with it,” Mr. Biddle said. “Between sacrificing the potential leverage inherent in the Taliban 5 and pre-emptively conceding the issue of U.S. withdrawal, the net of recent policy choices would appear to have diminished the prospects for a settlement rather than enhancing them.”

At a House Armed Services Committee hearing Wednesday, Rep. Michael K. Conaway, Texas Republican, asserted to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel that “the return of these five individuals, once they serve their halfway house nonsense in Qatar and get back into Afghanistan, will strengthen the Taliban and their efforts to do whatever it is they want to do in Afghanistan.”

Mr. Hagel answered, “Maybe.”

The defense secretary quoted from an intelligence assessment that said "a few new Taliban leaders, no matter how senior, will not appreciably change the threat to the Afghan people, to the Afghan army, but most importantly for us — to our forces."

Rep. Adam Smith of Washington, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, said of the release: "Of course it came with risk. But I think that risk has been greatly exaggerated."

The U.S. withdrawal is set to transpire this way:

From a surge peak of 100,000 troops in 2011, there are now 32,000 U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan serving in an advise and assist role. They go on missions with Afghan security forces, but the Afghans take the lead. In some situations, they engage in combat on the ground and perform airstrikes.

The combat mission is due to end in December. With the expected signing of a security pact, the U.S. will have 9,800 troops in the country next year deployed with Afghans and other NATO soldiers at various bases. The responsibility for defending the country shifts fully to the Afghan government.

By the end of 2015, about 5,000 U.S. troops will be consolidated at two points: Kabul and the sprawling Bagram Airfield. The main missions will be training and supporting counterterrorism operations. Those troops will leave by the end of 2016.

Left behind will be units to defend the embassy and handle paperwork for the procurement of equipment in a process called security assistance.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Former American Legion Official Charged With Methamphetamine Possession

[Oklahoman](#), June 13, 2014

EL RENO — A former American Legion official has been charged with methamphetamine possession after the illegal drug was found during a search of his home.

David Austin Kellerman, 43, is facing a felony drug count and a misdemeanor drug paraphernalia count.

State and federal authorities searched his house in Mustang Tuesday morning and arrested Kellerman after finding baggies of crystal methamphetamine and a glass pipe. He was charged in Canadian County District Court.

Kellerman has been under investigation for months because hundreds of thousands of dollars are missing from the American Legion operations in Oklahoma.

Investigators Tuesday were looking for evidence of embezzlement, knowingly concealing stolen property, fraud,

money laundering, illegal gambling and drug offenses, according to court records on the search.

"Kellerman admitted the baggies with crystal methamphetamine and glass pipe were his," a U.S. Homeland Security Department special agent, Eric Coburn, reported in the arrest affidavit.

Kellerman was the state adjutant from September 2003 to December 2011, court records show. The paid position has been described as similar to a chief executive officer of a company.

He remained active in the Legion in 2012 and 2013, serving as an assistant to his successors.

No one has been charged yet over the missing funds.

National officials of the American Legion voted to take over the Oklahoma operations in March because of the missing money. The national officials ousted or fired all the state Legion officials.

National officials have estimated the financial losses in Oklahoma could be as much as \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Legal problems

Kellerman already faces a felony charge over missing rifles.

He was charged in January with taking ceremonial World War I and World War II rifles from Legion posts and selling them.

Kellerman is on probation for a 2012 marijuana offense. His attorney in 2012 said he is a veteran being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder.

His current attorney, Scott Adams, declined Wednesday to comment about the newest charge.

STATE COLLEGE: Feds Raid State College Area Asian Restaurants For Undocumented Workers

[State College \(PA\) Centre Daily Times](#), June 12, 2014

STATE COLLEGE — It was just before 11 a.m. Thursday, but at a number of Asian restaurants in State College, the lunch rush never happened.

Instead, doors were locked, employees were questioned and some people were taken away by authorities.

Local, state and federal law enforcement detained at least 13 people in what U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson said is an investigation of undocumented workers.

Bill Ebken, of the Frame Factory, works right in the middle of three of the restaurants known to be targeted — Hundred Degrees Hot Pot, My Thai and Fuji and Jade Garden, all off Westerly Parkway. He said he noticed something happening around 10:45-11 a.m., when cars began pulling up in front of the shopping center in areas marked for no parking. He quickly realized that they were law enforcement vehicles, about 25 of them, from various agencies.

Ebken said he looked into the window at Hundred Degrees Hot Pot and saw employees being interviewed by officers.

"It's disturbing," Ebken said. "It's a little scary to see all the policemen."

It was not just police.

Investigators said the activity is part of a "targeted federal investigation," but declined further comment. A U.S. Department of Homeland Security truck parked behind the State College Police Department. Officers from the state Attorney General's Office joined them. A large van blocked visibility to the department's sally port, the secured gateway where people in custody are brought in by police.

The limited access was a recurring theme Thursday as media sought information about the operation.

Officials referred all calls and inquiries to Nicole Navas at Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement division for comment. Police were not allowed to release information, but the borough's administration also was muffled, having been told not to talk to the media.

Calls to State College Municipal Building, to speak with Mayor Elizabeth Goreham or Borough Council members, were likewise redirected to Homeland Security, which answered all questions with a short statement.

"In order not to compromise this ongoing criminal investigation, no additional details are available at this time," Navas said in an email. "Residents should not be alarmed of any public safety concerns."

A later inquiry received a similar response: Navas didn't "have any additional public information to release at this time."

Thompson, R-Howard Township, however, offered some clarification.

"I have been informed that today's actions were carried out ... as part of an ongoing worksite investigation, looking into the hiring of unauthorized workers," Thompson said in response to an inquiry from the Centre Daily Times. "Due to (the) ongoing nature of the investigation, the department was not able to share additional details, but they have agreed to keep me informed as this moves forward."

Officers were noted on scene, or employees or ownership confirmed investigations, at these locations: Hundred Degrees Hot Pot, My Thai, and Fuji and Jade Garden, all on Westerly Parkway; Penang on North Atherton Street; College Buffet in the WalMart Plaza off North Atherton; China Wok at Northland Center; and China Dragon on South Allen Street.

There were unconfirmed reports of a police presence at Hunan Wok on East College Avenue and Chen's Mongolian Buffet on South Atherton Street. Chen's was closed Thursday evening.

The owners of My Thai and Chen's did not return messages seeking comment, and numbers for the others

were either disconnected or unavailable. Calls to a number of the businesses Thursday evening were unanswered. At several others, employees answered but said no managers or owners were available for comment.

Endi Lu owns Ni Hao in Northland Center and Bellefonte Wok. Neither of his restaurants was visited by the authorities, but family members own College Buffet and China Wok.

"It's tough. There's all kinds of rumors out there," Lu said. "But you hope people know how you run your business. Everything we do is above board."

Three male employees from College Buffet were detained for questioning, he said. Lu said the restaurant closed because those men were cooks, but the plan was to be up and running for Friday service.

"We got all the staff back," he said. "That's good."

At least 13 people were seen taken from the various locations, secured with plastic ties at their wrists, placed in law enforcement vans and driven to the State College Municipal Building. Officers were seen carrying cardboard boxes marked "evidence."

Lu said health inspectors visited College Buffet after federal and state officials had completed their tasks there.

Homeland Security has not issued any follow-up information on the reason for the raid, any potential charges or the identities of the detained individuals.

Feds Say Man Who Sought Love Online Was Scammed Out Of \$200,000

[Dallas Morning News](#), June 13, 2014

A Maryland man told a Dallas federal agent he fell in love with Trisha Jones, an American businesswoman, on an online dating website.

Trisha was not, however, what she seemed. She turned out to be a 24-year-old Nigerian man named Oluwaseun Oyesanya who is now accused of scamming the victim out of more than \$200,000, federal court records show.

Oyesanya is in federal custody in Seagoville and was indicted Wednesday on a charge of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. He lives in Toronto but has traveled to Nigeria to visit his wife and son, records show.

Court records describe the allegations.

The 63-year-old victim told a Homeland Security Investigations agent that he met the suspect online and thought she was from the Baltimore area and was visiting Nigeria on business.

Oyesanya claimed to have an import business dealing in historical artifacts that are shipped to the U.S. for resale. The victim said he corresponded with the suspect through email but that they never met.

The victim wired the money to Oyesanya, who used a Dallas man he met online to help collect some of the money.

The Dallas man told the agent he thought Trisha Jones was sending him money from her clients so he could send it to her in Nigeria.

The agent, acting undercover, contacted Oyesanya last year on the online dating website.

"At first, Jones was trying to scam me into sending her money, but as time passed Jones began asking me to pick up money from scammed victims," the agent wrote in a federal complaint.

Oyesanya was arrested in March in Minnesota.

CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

Heroin's Hidden Journey

[USA Today](#), June 12, 2014

NOGALES, Ariz. — The driver of a blue Dodge Durango appeared unusually nervous to a Customs and Border Protection officer working one of the eight lanes at the Dennis DeConcini Port of Entry, among the busiest entrances into the U.S. from Mexico.

The officer directed the mud-streaked 1996 SUV with Arizona plates to an inspection area for a lengthy examination.

Mexican drug cartel figures operate sophisticated distribution systems that move narcotics into and across the U.S. But they typically don't work Easter week in observance of the religious holiday. So the Monday morning after Easter, officers were wary of smugglers trying to move extra loads of heroin and other drugs, said Joe Agosttini, assistant port director in Nogales.

We're catching people who are 82 years old ... bringing narcotics to the U.S. Juveniles, young kids that are in middle school or high school.

Joe Agosttini, Customs and Border Protection assistant port director

An officer led the Durango's driver and three passengers into a locked holding area. Another guided a drug-sniffing dog around the truck. Ralph, a Belgian Malinois, smelled the engine compartment, the bumpers, the door handles, the tires. Nothing.

Officers popped the tailgate and opened the doors, glove compartment and tire-jack storage compartment. Ralph sniffed door panels, arm rests, seats, air-conditioning vents, glove box, side panels. Nothing.

Officers pulled three suitcases from the back and laid them on the pavement. The dog walked across all three, smelling the handles and zippers. Still nothing.

Three officers reinspected the SUV, using flashlights and mirrors on long handles to peer into crevices, a heavy pole to thump surfaces and a hand-held electronic device to measure the density of areas hidden behind fabric, plastic or metal. Still nothing.

Finally convinced there were no hidden drugs, an officer retrieved the driver and passengers. A young woman and three elementary-school-aged kids climbed in and rejoined a line of vehicles entering the U.S.

Every vehicle and every person crossing the border is suspect, Agosttini said.

"We're catching people who are 82 years old ... bringing narcotics to the U.S.," he said. "Juveniles, young kids that are in middle school or high school."

Authorities say heroin smugglers will use almost any means available to sneak their product into the United States from Mexico, then distribute it across the country.

Joe Dana, KPNX

Puzzle pieces Mexican smuggling rings compartmentalize to obscure trail

Nearly all of the heroin fueling a U.S. resurgence enters the country over the 1,933-mile Mexico border, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Customs officers in Nogales have seized more heroin in the first six months of fiscal 2014 than during each of the past three full fiscal years, Agosttini said.

Most is hidden in vehicles crossing through ports of entry like the bustling Nogales gate. Smaller amounts are carried in on foot by men dubbed "mules," hiking established desert smuggling routes. Some is ferried in by plane or boat.

Most is taken to stash houses in cities near the international line — San Diego and Los Angeles; Tucson and Phoenix; and El Paso, Laredo, McAllen and Brownsville, Texas. From there, operatives drive loads along interstate freeways to destinations across the country. The operations are highly compartmentalized, said Douglas Coleman, special agent in charge of the Phoenix Division of the DEA.

"Nobody knows each other. Nobody knows anything. The transporters, they only know they're supposed to go to Detroit, and when they get to Detroit, they're supposed to call a phone number and await instructions," he said.

Often, payments are handled by other operatives. DEA officials concentrate on identifying and apprehending top-level cartel commanders, but the smuggling networks are specifically engineered to thwart law enforcement.

"When we arrest one, it's hard for us to get the entire picture, because everybody has a role in the organization, but nobody knows what the others' roles are," Coleman said. "When we catch a guy, he doesn't have anything to tell us. All he has is a number."

Hidden stash Secret compartments in all kinds of objects hiding drug

Drug traffic across the border is controlled by two Mexican crime organizations that have been fighting for years for trafficking routes and the drug trade, leaving more than 100,000 people dead in Mexico, Coleman said.

The Sinaloa Cartel largely controls smuggling across the border into California, Arizona and New Mexico. The Juárez Cartel generally manages the trade through Texas.

Most heroin is packed in secret compartments built into private vehicles' door panels, seats, bumpers, drive shafts or tires. Heroin is even hidden in spaces built inside gas tanks. Smugglers also conceal it in a variety of intricately altered objects: coolers, hollowed-out firewood, baby strollers, soda cans, fire extinguishers.

Last year, authorities found 117 pounds of heroin hidden in plastic irrigation pipes brought across the border with a load of construction materials.

Sometimes drivers, passengers or even pedestrians who walk across the border carry heroin on their bodies.

"People can tape packages to their legs, their thighs, their buttocks, to different parts of their bodies," Agosttini said.

"They're doing that in a way that they're shaping up the packages to the shape of their bodies. For instance, if it's on the upper torso, it's shaped like it's their chest," he said.

Rugged routes With scouts on high, mules carry drugs across border to highway

One morning this spring, Pinal County sheriff's Lt. Matt Thomas pulled off Interstate 8 at the Sonoran Desert National Monument, a stretch of rocky mountains and valleys about 70 miles north of the international boundary in Arizona.

The 487,000-acre preserve is promoted as a prime location for backpacking, stargazing, hunting and horseback riding. But it's also a drug-smuggling corridor. Cartel operatives carry by backpack loads of drugs from the border through the desert to Interstate 8, which whisks motorists between California and Arizona.

"When you just look at this desert area, and people may even be driving by on I-8 headed to San Diego or wherever, when they look at this area, they just see open desert," Thomas said. "When I drive up, all I see are smuggling routes."

Cartel scouts hide in mountains overlooking smuggling routes and desert roads, coordinating movements of mules and the transport crews who pick them up along the freeway. Scouts also watch for Border Patrol agents and other authorities, telling mules when to proceed and when to hide.

When you just look at this desert area, and people may even be driving by on I-8 headed to San Diego or wherever, when they look at this area, they just see open desert. When I drive up, all I see are smuggling routes.

Lt. Matt Thomas, Pinal County Sheriff's Department

Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu estimates cartel operatives have 75 to 100 mountain lookout posts in Pinal County, which is roughly the size of Connecticut. Support personnel ferry supplies to scouts, replenishing water, food, batteries and other supplies, allowing them to shelter among the rocks for days or weeks at a time.

A few miles away along I-8, Thomas stopped at a reflective roadside mile marker. Smugglers often use the markers for rendezvous points. He climbed over a barbed-wire fence and stepped past a rattlesnake to a gully shrouded by mesquite trees providing a bit of shade. He found several discarded homemade burlap backpacks and smaller store-bought knapsacks. Smugglers use them to carry heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine.

Carriers also had abandoned blankets, a sleeping bag, empty plastic water bottles and candy wrappers. The smell of human waste wafted in the hot air. Smugglers were nowhere to be seen. Transport vehicles likely had picked them up and driven them and their dope to a Phoenix stash house.

In February, deputies arrested a Mexican man driving a cargo van south of Casa Grande, Ariz. Inside was 600 pounds of food bundled in trash bags, cases of bottled water, a stockpile of 5-gallon jugs of water, and nearly a dozen cans of diesel fuel. He told deputies cartel figures paid him \$4,000 to drive the van from Phoenix, deliver supplies to scouts, and pick up a load of marijuana to shuttle to a location his employers hadn't yet identified to him.

Marijuana remains the top drug smuggled through the region, but heroin is increasing and fast, Thomas said.

"A couple of years back, if you would find a pound of heroin, that would be a big load," he said. "Nowadays, it's common to interdict 50 or 60 pounds, up to 100 pounds, of heroin."

Removal Of Border Agency's Internal Affairs Chief Raises Alarms

By Andrew Becker

[Huffington Post](#), June 13, 2014

The removal of a high-ranking U.S. Customs and Border Protection official this week was designed to soothe critics who say the agency has been too soft on Border Patrol agents and other employees accused of misconduct, abuse and corruption.

But James F. Tomsheck's removal as chief of internal affairs has raised more alarms about the agency, which has witnessed a dramatic spike in shootings and violence in recent years. Customs and Border Protection agents have killed 28 people since 2010.

Tomsheck's supporters said he is a scapegoat for a broken and byzantine hierarchy that was created after 9/11. For years, Tomsheck wrestled with larger, more established watchdog agencies at the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement – all with jurisdiction over Border Patrol misconduct.

As a result, Tomsheck's hands often were tied because of interference from these other agencies and even senior Customs and Border Protection officials, especially when it

came to disciplinary action, said James Wong, who retired as Tomsheck's deputy in late 2011.

"With very serious misconduct – borderline criminal activity – senior management often gave Border Patrol agents a slap on the wrist or did nothing at all," Wong said. "Senior managers thwarted our ability to conduct complete investigations."

Tomsheck was removed as the assistant commissioner of internal affairs Monday, a post he had held for eight years, as part of what the agency called a reorganization and review of the office. Tomsheck, who has been with the federal government for roughly 30 years, was previously a U.S. Secret Service agent.

In some cases, Tomsheck's office was kept in the dark about investigations or shielded from information. Wong said the office often was told that the FBI and homeland security inspector general were handling investigations and had minimal access to those cases. It would be months or years before internal affairs could conduct its own reviews of alleged misconduct or shootings to learn whether agents had followed policy.

In particular, Wong pointed to the June 2010 shooting death of Sergio Hernandez Guereca, a 15-year-old Mexican citizen who was gunned down near El Paso, Texas. The inspector general, senior Customs and Border Protection officials and others blocked the internal affairs office from significant information about the shooting, Wong said.

The Justice Department eventually declined to prosecute the agent involved.

"Internal affairs had minimal access to many investigations," Wong said. "We were consistently shielded from conducting our own reviews" both by outside agencies and top Customs and Border Protection managers.

Tomsheck, who referred a request for comment to his lawyer, was moved to another position within the agency. Tomsheck's attorney, Barry Coburn, said they were considering next steps.

W. Ralph Basham, a former director of the U.S. Secret Service who hired Tomsheck to lead the internal affairs office in June 2006, soon after he became Customs and Border Protection's commissioner, said he was shocked by the claim in news reports that his former employee was not aggressive in going after allegations and complaints of civil rights violations and abuse.

In fact, he said the opposite was true – Tomsheck had been accused of being too aggressive in going after misconduct.

"I quite frankly believe his hands were tied when he tried to go after some of these abuses," said Basham, who retired from the agency in 2009. "Others in the organization did not want the internal affairs division to do their job. I believe they hindered them in many ways by a lack of cooperation."

Ronald T. Hosko, who recently retired as the head of the FBI's criminal investigative division, agreed that Tomsheck's office was undermined by turf battles, and he never knew Tomsheck to back away from an investigation. The FBI, he said, also had long-running disputes with the homeland security inspector general for failing to share information in Customs and Border Protection corruption and misconduct cases.

Hosko said members of drug cartels and gangs have been applying for jobs in the U.S. government "for the purpose of corrupting the system by passing along intelligence, sharing intelligence gaps, showing vulnerabilities."

Not sharing information "goes against everything we learned post-9/11," he said.

Wong said Tomsheck aggressively pursued prosecutions of agents. He cited the case of Jesus Diaz Jr., a Border Patrol agent who was convicted in 2011 of excessive use of force and making false statements.

Internal affairs agents investigated an October 2008 incident in which Diaz, who was assigned to a Border Patrol station in Eagle Pass, Texas, was accused of violently pulling on the handcuffs that restrained a Mexican juvenile suspected of smuggling drugs while he pressed his knee into the victim's back, dropping him face first, kicking him and later lying about it.

Other watchdog agencies – namely the homeland security inspector general and Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Professional Responsibility – already had conducted cursory investigations and found no wrongdoing.

"They didn't do anything" to interview the victim and fully investigate, Wong said.

Internal affairs agents picked up the case, found the abuse victim in Mexico and interviewed him, and presented their investigation – corroborated by agents who witnessed the incident – that concluded that Diaz had committed a crime and lied about it. After an initial mistrial, a federal jury in Del Rio, Texas, convicted Diaz in February 2011.

Basham questioned why other watchdogs, among them the FBI and the homeland security inspector general, weren't being scrutinized and held accountable for not investigating such allegations – as they are the lead agencies to investigate civil rights violations, misconduct and corruption.

But the problems involving accountability and transparency don't lie only with internal affairs or other watchdog agencies, Basham said.

"The Border Patrol is the elephant in the middle of the room that did not want any outside investigation of their agency," he said. "They had for many years dealt with these things internally. And that obviously caused some issues."

Officials with the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection declined to comment on Tomsheck's removal.

The decision to remove Tomsheck from his internal affairs position follows the release late last month of an independent review of the agency's use-of-force policies and actions, which concluded that investigations into shootings and other violent acts lacked rigor, among other findings.

Facing public pressure from immigration advocates, civil rights groups and critics in Congress, Customs and Border Protection Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske ordered the release of the long-awaited report, which was blocked from the public for more than a year after its February 2013 completion.

Agency spokesman Chris O'Neil did not address Basham's statements in a written response but thanked Tomsheck "for his service and his efforts to build the (Customs and Border Protection) Office of Internal Affairs."

"As he has said repeatedly, Commissioner Kerlikowske is committed to integrity and transparency, and improving the use of the force review process," O'Neil wrote.

Tomsheck expanded the office from about five investigators when he took over to roughly 200 today stationed in 20 national field offices to weed out corruption and misconduct, on top of several hundred other analysts, polygraphers and other employees.

He was also the agency's chief security officer, approved security clearances and oversaw background investigations of prospective employees and five-year reinvestigations of current employees and other personnel matters.

Some saw Tomsheck as a polarizing figure who aggressively instituted a polygraph program, among other initiatives, to address corruption and integrity issues. He clashed with his counterparts at the inspector general's office, who had waged a turf war with the FBI over corruption investigations, according to current and former homeland security officials.

The agency's internal affairs agents, many of whom come from other investigative agencies, are not designated as criminal investigators. They mostly conduct reviews of administrative violations and misconduct. Many are assigned to FBI Border Corruption Task Forces around the country.

Customs and Border Protection has named Mark Morgan, the FBI's deputy assistant director for inspections, to lead the office on an interim basis, help strengthen the agency's internal reviews and foster cooperation with other watchdogs starting later this month, a decision that Basham found curious.

"What is the FBI going to be able to do under the same constraints that James Tomsheck and his shop were not able to overcome?" he said. "That's a question that needs to be answered."

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY **ADMINISTRATION**

To Speed Up Security Lines, Airports Start Tracking Your Smartphone

[Bloomberg BusinessWeek](#), June 12, 2014

Cincinnati's regional airport will become the first in the U.S. to monitor travelers' smartphones and other Wi-Fi equipped gadgets to quickly identify congested areas and display wait times for the security checkpoint.

The idea is that tracking traffic flows and analyzing data quickly will help airports and the Transportation Security Administration reduce or eliminate problem spots. Cincinnati's airport, which has seen a steep and steady slide in passenger traffic since 2008, will also try to use the data to increase retail sales in the terminal. There might be advantages for travelers, too, such as more accurate wait times posted at customs lines or check-in desks.

"When you proactively have that information, the passengers are actually much calmer and they find the queuing experience less daunting," says Martin Bowman, director of global airports for

Lockheed Martin (LMT). The company's BlipTrack system is already deployed in 20 airports, including Amsterdam, Dubai, Geneva, Oslo, and Toronto. Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport is set to become the first in the U.S. to use the technology, with testing this month before the system makes a debut in July with data displays showing the wait times for the security lines.

The system, which is similar in concept to Apple's (AAPL) iBeacon location technology, detects the presence of a gadget via its embedded Wi-Fi and Bluetooth signals. Even though it doesn't gather data to identify a device's owner or other personal information, some European airports notify travelers that the technology is in use. Cincinnati airport officials don't plan to notify travelers, however, saying the system poses no privacy issues.

About half of airport passengers carry a Wi-Fi-enabled device such as a smartphone or laptop, Bowman said, and that number is only expected to rise. Over time, BlipTrack's wireless signal tracking will allow the airport to more closely analyze passengers' movements and collect data on how people use retail and restaurant options. "How long is the line at Starbucks," says airport spokeswoman Melissa Wideman by way of example. "How much time are people spending in our shops?"

It's all well and good to remove uncertainty from the wait at the security checkpoint, but it's not clear airport-congestion data can ease the sorts of budget constraints driving airport decision making. The Cincinnati airport, which

is located near Covington, Ky., drew 5.7 million passengers last year, fewer than half the 13.6 million passengers that came through in 2008, before

Delta Air Lines (DAL) merged with Northwest. Even the best data cannot make up for the revenue lost by that kind of traffic drop.

However, says Bowman, it can make some of the economic choices easier. "Some of the emotions are removed from the conversation," he said. Travelers can get used to providing this data, whether they want to or not. Bowman predicts about 50 U.S. airports will be interested in the technology.

If you're lucky, you may also get to the gate quicker—with more time to stop for a coffee on the way, which helps the airport.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Vermont Getting Disaster Aid For April Flooding

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) – Vermont is getting federal disaster aid for flooding in April that closed roads and bridges.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced late Wednesday that President Barack Obama approved the disaster aid declaration covering flood damage from April 15 through April 18.

The state estimated the flooding cost over \$1 million, the minimum required to qualify for federal assistance.

The declaration makes funding available to state and eligible local governments and nonprofit groups for emergency work and repairs in Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Lamoille, Orange, Orleans and Washington counties.

Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation efforts statewide.

James Russo has been named federal coordinating officer for the recovery efforts.

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Sedona Preps For Post-Slide Fire Flooding

[Arizona Republic](#), June 12, 2014

With monsoon almost here (the season starts Sunday and runs through Sept. 15), the City of Sedona is one municipality taking preventative action after the Slide Fire damaged tens of thousands of acres of woodland in the Coconino National Forest.

The city is asking for the community's help in filling 30,000 sandbags provided by Yavapai County Emergency

Management. The filled sandbags will be available to residents for use in protecting their homes.

The risk of flooding is high this year. We're expecting a wetter monsoon than average, and after a wildfire, "the charred ground where vegetation has burned away cannot easily absorb rainwater, increasing the risk of flooding and mudflows," according to FEMA's FloodSmart.gov.

To help out, the city is asking volunteers to come to the maintenance yard at 2070 Contractors Road between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Friday, June 20, and Saturday, June 21. Water and energy bars will be provided, and they'll have a sandbag-filling machine.

Organizers stress that it's strenuous work and ask volunteers to be prepared with sturdy shoes, hats, work gloves, and sunscreen.

Sandbags will be available starting June 23 at the following locations:

Longmont Flood Funding Begins To Flow In

By Scott Rochat

[Longmont \(CO\) Times-Call](#), June 12, 2014

The flood funding bottleneck has broken open.

On Wednesday, Longmont received \$817,000 of federally approved money for building a temporary Longmont Dam Road last winter. The reimbursement had been cleared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency but not yet released by the state.

"I hope this is the start of a pattern," said Longmont emergency manager Dan Eamon.

The project cost \$1.3 million to build.

The approval means that Longmont has now gotten \$1,067,285 of the FEMA funds that it's eligible for. For months, the city has been in a frustrating pattern where FEMA would approve expenses but Denver still needed to verify the receipts before a check could be cut loose.

Prior to September's flood, the state's emergency management division had three finance people. By March, that had ramped up to 15, including three people borrowed from the division's grant department and six more contracted from Deloitte, one of the "big four" accounting and audit firms.

Deloitte, in turn, set up an electronic reimbursement system expected to speed things along. The first requests entered that system in early May; since Deloitte said the city could expect a turnaround in about 30 days, public works director Dale Rademacher joked that he was ready for "Christmas in June."

Christmas has come. But there's still presents to open. Another \$9.5 million of expenses have been OK'd by FEMA but not yet come home, including \$1.1 million that have gone all the way through the approval system and are just waiting on the state.

"One of the things we're hoping to be able to do is predict a bit, to say 'It's been 90 days, we can expect some

money,” Eamon said. “We don’t have enough of these that we have that predictive element yet. But we’re hoping to get there.”

Longmont estimates the total cost of flood-related work at \$152 million.

FEMA To Evaluate Nuke Plant Emergency Drill

By J.D. Prose

[Beaver County \(PA\) Times](#), June 12, 2014

SHIPPINGPORT — The Federal Emergency Management Agency said Wednesday it will evaluate an emergency preparedness exercise at the Beaver Valley Nuclear Power Station in Shippingport next week.

FEMA will assess the ability of Pennsylvania and West Virginia to respond to an emergency at the site.

MaryAnn Tierney, regional administrator for FEMA Region III, said in a statement that such drills are held annually and FEMA uses them to evaluate state and local responses in the 10-mile radius emergency planning zone and gauge support from surrounding jurisdictions.

FEMA will send its report to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission within 90 days, and a final report will be made public within four months.

Preliminary findings of the drill will be presented by FEMA at a public meeting at 10 a.m. June 20 at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott, 777 Aten Road, Moon Township.

Speakers will include officials from FEMA, the NRC, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Contractor To Again Sift Debris From Deadly Washington Landslide

By Lauren Raab

[Los Angeles Times](#), June 12, 2014

Three months after a deadly landslide wiped out the community of Oso, Wash., officials have selected a company to deal further with wreckage that remains.

The Snohomish County Council agreed Wednesday night to award a \$6.4-million contract to IMCO General Construction to handle “sorting, screening, redistributing, grading and removal of slide debris.”

The March 22 slide killed 43 people. The youngest was a 4-month-old girl, the oldest a 91-year-old woman. The body of one victim, Molly Kristine “Kris” Regelbrugge, 44, has not yet been found. Active search operations were called off in late April.

After the slide, search-and-rescue teams went through debris. IMCO will handle any matter that the teams put on private property, largely near roadsides, Gary Haakenson, a county executive director, told the Los Angeles Times.

“We want people to know that we’re not just going in and shoveling stuff off,” he said. Sifting has “already been done once, and we’re being cautious as we do it again.”

“We are using the medical examiner protocols that were set up during the search-and-rescue mission,” Haakenson emphasized, adding that every scoop of dirt would be monitored.

Items that former residents might want to reclaim will be taken to a family reunification center and cleaned up, Haakenson said. Logs and other plant matter are to be ground into chips and left on site.

A bid award recommendation from the county said the work was expected to begin June 25 and be done by Sept. 22. Federal Emergency Management Agency funds can cover 87% of the cost, it said.

The slide also left a stretch of State Route 530 — a key highway between the small cities of Arlington and Darrington — unusable. About 18 million gallons of mud were bulldozed aside in the weeks that followed, and one of the highway’s two lanes reopened May 31. The other lane is expected to reopen in October, Haakenson said.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICE

Polls On Left And Right Agree: Eric Cantor Didn’t Lose On Immigration

By Jessica Meyers

[Politico](#), June 12, 2014

A new conservative-sponsored poll mirrors a liberal counterpart and throws more water on notions that the battle over immigration led to the downfall of Majority Leader Eric Cantor.

Only 22 percent of Virginia residents who voted for Cantor’s opponent, Dave Brat, cited immigration as the primary reason for their vote, according to the poll. About 77 percent cited other factors, such as the Republican leader’s focus on national politics instead of local issues.

Americans for a Conservative Direction, the right-leaning branch of FWD.us, commissioned the poll. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg launched the broader advocacy group last year in his first foray into politics.

The results resemble findings in a poll commissioned by liberal advocacy group Americans United for Change. It noted about 72 percent of registered voters in Cantor’s district support reforms.

Immigration reform has stalled in the House for months, and advocates see this summer as the last chance before fall elections. They’ve never considered Cantor much of an ally, but Brat made immigration a central focus of the race and slammed the Republican leader for agreeing to even piecemeal proposals.

And yet “amnesty” — a term Brat used to decry Cantor’s acceptance of legal status for undocumented

residents' children — polled last of five issues GOP voters considered harmful. Instead, nearly 73 percent of voters supported a proposal that would secure the border, go after employers who hire illegal immigrants and establish a pathway to citizenship after certain requirements are met.

The poll notes that about 20 percent of Republican voters oppose immigration reform, a figure that nearly matches the disapproving voters in this race. "The immigration issue was, therefore, a factor in Tuesday's election, but it was a relatively small one," the poll concludes. "Rep. Cantor had several more powerful problems with primary voters in his district."

The findings, unveiled by Republican pollster Jon Lerner at Basswood Research, fall in line with Democratic arguments that immigration had a smaller impact on the race than initially perceived.

"Issues can help define a dissatisfied group of people," said Scott Corley, the executive director of Compete America, a coalition that supports reform. "But the issue in this race ran deeper and they do for every candidate."

Cantor Loss Not About Immigration, Durbin Says

By Jacqueline Klimas

[Washington Times](#), June 13, 2014

Sen. Richard Durbin, Illinois Democrat, said Thursday that Majority Leader Eric Cantor's primary defeat was not because of his stance on immigration reform.

The assistant majority leader said on MSNBC that Sen. Lindsey Graham, South Carolina Republican, won his primary by supporting comprehensive immigration reform in the Senate, while Mr. Cantor, Virginia Republican, lost by flip-flopping on his position. He said the vast majority of Americans would support the Senate bill if they understood what was in it.

"If you stand up and explain to the American people what the bill is all about, you're going to get support," he said.

Mr. Durbin also pointed out that 72 percent of voters in Mr. Cantor's district's primary said in exit polls that they supported immigration reform, suggesting that the problem may be something else.

He called on House leadership to take up the immigration reform bill that passed the Senate last year.

"Call the Senate immigration bill on the floor of the House of Representatives, it will pass," he said.

John Boehner: Eric Cantor Doesn't Change Immigration

By Seung Min Kim

[Politico](#), June 13, 2014

For those looking for direct signs of immigration reform's life — or death — from Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) on Thursday, there wasn't one.

Asked at his weekly news conference whether the prospects of an overhaul were dead in light of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's primary loss on Tuesday, Boehner responded: "The issue of immigration reform has not changed."

The reason: President Barack Obama has still not gained the trust from House Republicans that the GOP says is necessary to do immigration reform, Boehner said.

"The president continues to ignore laws that he signed into law, violating his oath of office, he did it again with the release of these Taliban five," the Ohio Republican said, referring to Guantanamo Bay prisoners Obama recently released in exchange for an American prisoner of war. "Every time he does this, it makes it harder to gain the trust of our members to do the big things that need to be done around here."

Cantor's primary opponent, particularly in the final weeks of the race, seized on the No. 2 House Republican's support for limited immigration reform measures — such as legal status for young undocumented immigrants — as broader amnesty for those here illegally.

Still, Cantor's loss in a race so hotly focused on immigration almost certainly hammered the nail in the coffin for the prospects of an immigration overhaul this year — whose chances were already facing significant hurdles in the GOP-led House.

Boehner declined to analyze the political implications of Cantor's defeat, and on immigration, he said: "We don't know that that is the issue or was the issue in the election."

But trust was still the paramount factor, Boehner said.

"Listen, the president is gonna have to demonstrate that he can be trusted to implement a law the way it is passed," Boehner said.

Editorial: Don't Let Cantor's Defeat Stop Immigration Reform

[Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#), June 12, 2014

The shocking defeat of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor is quickly being cast as the final nail in the coffin for immigration reform in Congress this year.

That's a shame — not the least because that's precisely what the tea party and other conservative groups wanted when they rallied behind upstart challenger David Brat, who easily beat Cantor in Tuesday's Republican primary in Virginia's 7th District.

It's not like Cantor was "soft" on immigration. In fact, he has helped block consideration of a bipartisan Senate package passed last year that included a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants already here.

Rather, he merely expressed willingness to consider piecemeal steps, such as legal status for those brought here as children.

But even those small fixes to our badly broken immigration system go too far for some conservatives. Brat, a little-known college professor who was vastly outspent, pilloried Cantor as favoring “amnesty” for illegal immigrants, not letting the facts get in his way.

Progress on immigration reform was going to be extremely difficult even before Cantor’s loss. Now, reform foes are trying to send the message that crossing them is political suicide.

Some Republicans had started to become more open on the immigration issue, realizing that our country is becoming more diverse and their party’s long-term future hangs in the balance. They should not falter now.

They include Rep. Jeff Denham of Turlock, who last October became the first House Republican to endorse a comprehensive reform bill introduced by House Democrats and who knows how important a common-sense solution is to the Central Valley and the rest of California. He is also leading the charge for a bill that would make it easier for undocumented children to become citizens by enlisting in the military. Denham’s office did not respond to questions Wednesday about whether Cantor’s loss would affect his stand on immigration.

Republicans need to recognize that Cantor’s district in the Richmond suburbs is by no means representative of the entire country. Immigration reform advocates point out that Sen. Lindsey Graham, who was also attacked for supporting some changes, easily won his primary Tuesday in South Carolina, a very conservative state.

There are other plausible reasons why Cantor lost. He didn’t take Brat seriously enough, lulled into complacency by early polls that showed him cruising to victory. He appeared too cushy with the Washington establishment and didn’t pay enough attention to his own constituents, focused on raising money for fellow House Republicans in his bid to rise to House speaker.

While Cantor doesn’t have to give up the seat he first won in 2000 until January, he announced Wednesday that he will step down as House majority leader on July 31. He threw his support behind Rep. Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield, the third-ranking House Republican, to succeed him in the post. McCarthy has also voiced support for incremental changes, including limited legal status for some undocumented immigrants; his role on the issue will only grow.

To no one’s surprise, tea party conservatives are crowing over Cantor’s loss. Some Democrats, including House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco, are also gleeful, arguing that it shows that the Republican Party is tilting too far to the right.

Yet, if part of the fallout is that immigration reform is stalled indefinitely, that is a steep price to pay.

Despite Eric Cantor’s Loss, Keep Going On Immigration Reform

[Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#), June 12, 2014

Well, that’s it for immigration reform this year. Or maybe not.

The conventional wisdom that erupted from the volcanic primary defeat of Virginia Republican Rep. Eric Cantor – an election that drew a laughably anemic turnout and a badly run campaign by the incumbent – was that his relatively moderate, or waffling, stance on immigration legislation did him in.

So said Cantor’s triumphant opponent, David Brat, a free-market warrior: “It’s the most symbolic issue that captures the difference between myself and Eric Cantor.” Yet other Republicans who have backed some versions of immigration reform, including South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, have not gone down in tea party flames.

And when the smoke clears, it’s quite possible that mainstream Republicans, big business, agriculture interests and others who are trying to bring the party around on immigration reform this year will prevail.

Absolutist tea partiers like Brat see immigration reform in simplistic terms: They believe they’re protecting American workers and jobs from those who would gladly accept the lowest of low wages from big business to pick vegetables, can seafood and clean skyscraper offices. But they’re wrong on that and they’re incapable of recognizing humanitarian considerations.

Majority Republicans appear to be sensitive to the notion that their inability to positively address a significant issue affecting Hispanics and other ethnic Americans borders on political suicide. That pragmatism is delicately driving the possibility of a bipartisan solution to the long-vexing dilemma. We’re hoping the gut reactions to Cantor’s defeat are wrong and the House will continue on the path of immigration reform sooner rather than later.

Immigration Reform Wasn’t The Reason For Cantor’s Defeat

[Boston Globe](#), June 12, 2014

Genuine surprises are so rare in modern elections that Tuesday’s shocking results in Virginia have left politicians grasping for explanations — and coming up with some duds. In a sharp rebuke to a senior party leader, a Tea Party-aligned challenger knocked off House majority leader Eric Cantor, a prodigious fundraiser who had seemed to be cruising to reelection. Unfortunately, though, there are signs that Republicans and Democrats alike may be jumping to the wrong conclusions about Cantor’s defeat, blaming his

openness to very minor immigration reforms instead of focusing on his problems closer to home.

Within hours of the defeat Tuesday, a new conventional wisdom was taking shape: Immigration reform, always a tough sell to the House GOP, is surely now dead. If even Cantor — who compiled a strong conservative record, and signaled an openness to only the most modest of reforms — can't escape the Tea Party's wrath, what Republican would dare vote for reform now? Democrats, meanwhile, cheered the results and said the election shows how much the Republican Party remains captive to its most extreme wing.

Continue reading below

Actually, the abrupt end of Cantor's career should sound a warning to all politicians, of all parties. Even in a deeply conservative district like Cantor's, hostility to immigration alone doesn't cause political earthquakes like this one. Cantor spent too much time building his national profile, raising money from out-of-state-donors, and schmoozing with business lobbyists, and not enough tending to his district. Until a few weeks ago, he seemed to be taking his reelection for granted — the worst kind of political malpractice. That was a quality he shared with two Republican grandees who ran into primary trouble this year, 91-year-old Ralph Hall, who lost a Texas House primary, and 76-year-old Thad Cochran, who is in imminent danger of losing his Senate seat in Mississippi; both were viewed as simply too Washington.

Because of the tumultuous GOP infighting of the last few years, it has seemed only natural to fit each of those three elections into the Tea Party-vs.-establishment storyline. And all three challengers did draw from the Tea Party playbook. But the differences are also notable. Unlike some of the legislators the Tea Party felled in past elections, like Mike Castle in Delaware or Robert Bennett in Utah, the three victims this year were each notable for the way they simply let their guard down. Tea Party or no, each let himself become a ripe target. Other, more prepared Republican politicians easily swatted aside Tea Party challenges this year, including Senator Lindsey Graham, an immigration-reform supporter whose South Carolina electorate is as conservative as they come.

If Speaker John Boehner and the remaining House GOP leadership accept the idea that Cantor's defeat means they must abandon immigration reform, they'll be misdiagnosing his demise. Cantor's defeat isn't a warning to Republicans to avoid immigration; it's a warning to all politicians, of all parties, that getting too cozy in office and ignoring the basic duties of a lawmaker can lead to consequences that are sudden, swift, and brutal.

Minnesota Delegation: Don't Move Bloomington Immigration Office

By Mark Brunswick, Star Tribune

[Minneapolis Star Tribune](#), June 13, 2014

Members of Minnesota's congressional delegation are asking the federal government to put the brakes on a plan to move an immigration agency to a new Bloomington location that could prove inaccessible to many people who need it.

U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken and U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison also introduced legislation that would prevent the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) from making the same mistake again.

The GSA has signed a \$14 million contract to move the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service from its current location near the Mall of America 11 miles to the west to a new building in Bloomington bordering Eden Prairie.

In violation of its own policies that require easy access to public transportation, the new building will be 3 miles from the closest bus stop. The GSA has admitted it misread a bus schedule in reviewing applications.

The move, which is expected in September, has raised the ire of immigration attorneys and advocates, who say many of their clients rely on public transportation to get to the center.

The legislation, authored by Klobuchar and co-sponsored by Franken, would require the GSA to verify that any building location meets public transportation distance requirements specified in its lease solicitation, and that public transportation runs regularly throughout the normal business hours of the building.

Klobuchar, Franken and Ellison also joined with Democratic Reps. Collin Peterson, Betty McCollum, Tim Walz and Rick Nolan in sending a letter calling on the GSA to halt the proposed move in Bloomington.

The letter asks the GSA to indicate whether it has explored alternative locations with adequate public transportation and whether it could use space at an old location that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is vacating. It also asks how much it might cost to vacate the lease of the new building, and whether another federal agency might use the space instead.

"With important questions still outstanding, we urge you to halt the current plans for relocation and to explore alternative locations that include adequate public transportation options," says the letter, which asks for answers by Friday.

The Minnesota USCIS office serves all of the state as well as the Dakotas and a large swath of western Wisconsin. Last year it saw about 28,000 people who scheduled interviews, used its information center or came to pick up citizenship certificates. It processed more than 13,000 applications for naturalization in 2013.

US COAST GUARD

Command Of US Coast Guard In Alaska Changing

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) – A new leader is taking over command of the U.S. Coast Guard in Alaska.

Rear Adm. Daniel Abel will take over the duty from Rear Adm. Thomas Ostebo.

Ostebo has been nominated for a promotion to vice admiral and is being considered for deputy commandant for mission support in Washington, D.C. He has commanded the Alaska district since 2011.

A change of command ceremony is scheduled for Thursday in Juneau.

Abel has been serving as commander of the Coast Guard's first district, which includes eight states in the Northeast.

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RALEIGH, N.C.: Coast Guard Faults Captain, Owner For Bounty Loss

[Raleigh \(NC\) News & Observer](#), June 12, 2014

RALEIGH, N.C. — The main reason a replica 18th century ship sank during Superstorm Sandy in 2012 was because the captain and management of the HMS Bounty made a bad decision to sail into the storm, a U.S. Coast Guard report said Thursday, echoing the conclusions of other federal investigators before them.

Although the inadequate preparation of the crew and the ship were also factors, "most critical was the failure of the Bounty's management and master to exercise effective oversight and risk management," the report said.

One crewmember died and Capt. Robin Walbridge was lost at sea and is presumed dead after the three-mast ship sank 90 miles off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

The vessel was built for the 1962 film "Mutiny on the Bounty" starring Marlon Brando. The ship also appeared in one of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies. When not in use by moviemakers, the ship was a pier-side attraction for visitors in ports and also served as an educational ship used to teach people how to sail.

The report said the HMS Bounty Organization chose to meet only the lesser standards of a recreational vessel, not the tougher requirements of a passenger craft.

The Bounty could have been certified as a small passenger or sailing-school vessel, but "the Bounty's management decided against taking the steps necessary to meet the minimum safety requirements that would have

applied with such certification in favor of the less stringent recreational standards."

The report recommends that Coast Guard leadership review policy on the staffing and operation of such show vessels.

A phone number for the ship's parent organization in East Setauket, New York, was disconnected Thursday. The Bounty was owned by Robert Hansen. A woman answering the phone at Hansen's home said he was not available and would not take a message.

A National Transportation Safety Board report in February concluded that Walbridge made a reckless decision to sail the HMS Bounty into the hurricane's well-forecast path.

The 108-foot-long ship set sail from New London, Connecticut, for St. Petersburg, Florida, Oct. 25, 2012, a day after Sandy reached hurricane strength. The plan was for the Bounty to arrive in St. Petersburg for a Nov. 10 event. But early in the morning of Oct. 29, 2012, the ship sank after taking on more than 10 feet of water. Crew members had to swim for their lives in the dark when the ship overturned.

The NTSB report noted that the wooden vessel took on water even in good sailing conditions and some wood rot also had been recently discovered on the ship. Workers at a Maine shipyard where the Bounty had received repairs testified during a joint Coast Guard and NTSB hearing last year that the ship had a decaying frame with an undetermined amount of rot in it before leaving port weeks before it sank.

Report Blames Captain, Owners In Bounty Loss

[Channel4000](#), June 13, 2014

If the management and the captain of the sunken tall ship HMS Bounty had "exercised the proper responsibility, judgment and prudence," the deaths of two people would have been prevented, according to a Coast Guard investigation report released Thursday.

Nineteen months after the Bounty sank in Hurricane Sandy off North Carolina, and more than a year after investigative hearings, the Coast Guard issued a wide range of recommendations in the disaster that killed rookie deckhand Claudene Christian and left Capt. Robin Walbridge missing and presumed dead. Fourteen crew members survived.

Before it sank roughly 100 miles off Hatteras, the Bounty was arguably the most famous three-masted wooden square rigger in the world.

The Coast Guard investigation asked life-and-death questions about proper ship maintenance, the crew's experience and the captain's decision to sail from Connecticut to Florida as Sandy pointed toward the East Coast.

The report could determine who, if anyone, might lose maritime licenses as a result of the disaster. During the investigation, officials said the report's findings could be forwarded to prosecutors who would determine whether to file criminal charges.

The report said the "most critical" cause of the sinking was the "failure of the Bounty's management and [captain] to exercise effective oversight and risk management in the overall operation of the Bounty and specifically with undertaking its final voyage in the face of an impending hurricane."

The "leading cause that contributed to the loss" of Walbridge and to Christian's death was the captain's "decision to order the crew to abandon the ship much too late," the report said.

The decision to abandon ship so late after hurricane conditions worsened and the "fact that the crew had not drilled in months," led the report to determine that the captain's "actions/and or inactions in this regard constitutes negligence."

The report also said the ships' owner HMS Bounty Organization LLC, "committed acts of negligence that contributed to" Christian's death and the presumed death of Walbridge.

Fatigue played a contributing factor in the disaster, the report said. The "crew was suffering from fatigue which was born out of lack of sleep, being sea sick, and from the physical exertion of fighting to save the vessel while in extreme weather conditions for over 24 hours."

The report also states that the Bounty operated as a recreational vessel under "less stringent safety standards" and recommended that the Coast Guard "examine if legislative, regulatory or policy changes are needed."

The ship was a movie star. A Canadian shipbuilder recreated the infamous 18th century British Navy vessel HMS Bounty for the 1962 MGM film "Mutiny on the Bounty," starring Marlon Brando. Claudene Christian, who was 42, said she was a descendant of the original Bounty's mutineer, Fletcher Christian.

More recently, the Bounty had appeared in Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie franchise. But the Bounty was never designed to sail the sea for 50 years. And the aging vessel had maintenance issues that would be expected of a half-century old, 180-foot-long ship made of oak and Douglas fir.

Did the crew have enough experience?

Questioning during the Coast Guard hearing frequently centered around the crew's experience. The Bounty was Christian's first job on a sailing vessel. In fact, 10 of Bounty's 15 crew members had been aboard for less than a year, including two who'd joined less than a month before its last voyage. Christian had been hired just five months before.

Her family remains in settlement talks in the wake of a \$90 million civil lawsuit the Christians filed against the ship's owner, the New York-based HMS Bounty Organization, headed by Robert Hansen. Hansen declined to testify at the Coast Guard hearings, evoking his Fifth Amendment constitutional rights against incriminating himself. Hansen has repeatedly declined CNN requests for interviews, although he has said more than once he intended to tell his side of the story, eventually.

On Thursday, in an e-mail to CNN, Hansen wrote, "I cannot comment while there is pending litigation."

An attorney for Christian's family, Ralph Mellusi, said the report will help push his case toward a final resolution.

The investigation also focused on Walbridge's decision to sail, despite the fact that he knew Hurricane Sandy was threatening to move up the East Coast.

Walbridge set sail for St. Petersburg, Florida, from New London, Connecticut. Crew members testified that Walbridge's plan was to stay east of the storm as it moved up the coast. But two days into the voyage, the captain diverted from his plan and ordered a course change.

Crew members testified that Walbridge wanted to pilot the ship northwest of Sandy to harness its winds. Turning more westerly, the boat crossed the path of the oncoming hurricane.

The weather worsened. The Bounty found itself in big trouble. Seawater leaking into the ship knocked out power to water pumps and engines, leaving the Bounty adrift while being battered by the raging storm.

Wind gusts above 100 mph and waves as high as 30 feet flipped Bounty on its side, tossing everyone into the predawn Atlantic. While the crew tried to keep their heads above the towering waves, the wind slammed the ship's dangerous mast and rigging on top of them. Getting tangled in underwater rigging nearly drowned some crew members, who were barely able to free themselves and swim to the ship's lifeboats.

Hours later, Coast Guard rescuers were able to save 14 crew members. Christian was fished out of the water. She was unresponsive and couldn't be revived. As for the captain, Walbridge's body was never found.

'We chase hurricanes'

During the hearing, Coast Guard and National Transportation Safety Board officials asked surviving crew members whether Walbridge believed it was acceptable to intentionally sail near hurricanes. As evidence, the Coast Guard introduced a YouTube video of Walbridge where he says, "We chase hurricanes." In the video, Walbridge explained how to "get a good ride" out of a hurricane by sailing "as close to the eye of it as you can" and staying behind the storm in its southeast quadrant.

Without a doubt, the captain's harshest critic at the hearing was Jan Miles, one of the world's most respected tall-

ship pilots and a self-described friend of Walbridge. Captain of the *Pride of Baltimore II*, Miles summed up Walbridge's actions in four words: "reckless in the extreme."

The Coast Guard's report follows final conclusions released in February by the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB determined the *Bounty* tragedy was largely caused by Walbridge's "reckless decision to sail ... into the well-forecast path of Hurricane Sandy."

Questions at the hearing pointed to the ship's maintenance record.

Extensive repairs had been made to the *Bounty* twice in the past decade, and some work had been done weeks before it sailed, according to crew testimony.

Rot infested 18-foot wooden planks on *Bounty's* forward right and left sides. Workers replaced them and caulked cracks and gaps in the ship's hull below the waterline.

Walbridge was warned by the shipyard that some of the boat's frames – its ribs – also contained rot, multiple witnesses testified. The shipyard manager testified that the captain said he'd do the repairs later. But not before he chose to sail toward Hurricane Sandy.

The way *Bounty* was licensed, it wasn't subject to the toughest Coast Guard inspections or mandatory repairs. The owners chose to license the ship as an uninspected passenger vessel, a classification described by experts at the hearing as a "regulatory no man's land."

The status allowed the *Bounty* to avoid requirements reserved for higher classified ships – including a sometimes expensive, time-consuming Coast Guard hull inspection every two years. The ship's classification also allowed it to hire less experienced crew to serve in officer positions.

The ship made its money by charging admission for shipboard tours at dockside. Under the regulations, the *Bounty* required only a simple, brief Coast Guard inspection that checked for obvious safety issues such as major leaks or malfunctioning emergency equipment. The *Bounty* passed one of these about two months before the disaster.

No safety inspections whatsoever were required for the ship to go to sea because the *Bounty* carried no passengers.

The crew members move forward

Many former *Bounty* sailors have struggled to recover from their ordeal. Most are working on the water again in various capacities.

Deckhand Jessica Hewitt, 25 at the time, nearly drowned when the ship sank. She's been overcoming deep seated fears linked to the *Bounty*. Now she's working on an oil rig supply ship in the Gulf of Mexico.

Josh Scornavacchi, who also nearly lost his life, still has dreams of living a seafaring life. He's looking for work on a vessel that will take him around the world.

USCG Releases Investigation Report Into Tall Ship *Bounty* Sinking

[gCaptain](#), June 13, 2014

On October 29, 2012, the tall ship *Bounty* sank off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, while attempting to transit through the forecasted path of Hurricane Sandy. U.S. Coast Guard Photo

The U.S. Coast Guard on Thursday released its report of investigation of the October 2012 fatal sinking of the tall ship *Bounty* during Hurricane Sandy off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, which resulted in the death of one crewmember and the Captain who remains missing and is presumed dead.

The findings in the report concluded that a combination of faulty management and crew risk assessment procedures contributed to the sinking. Specifically, choosing to navigate a vessel in insufficient material condition in close proximity to an approaching hurricane with an inexperienced crew was highlighted, the report says.

The report recommends that the Coast Guard review the existing policy for attraction vessels, including vessel manning and operating status.

The report also lists such recommendations as that the HMS *Bounty* Organization establish organizational policy that dictates vessel operational parameters based on weather, sea state or destination, and also establish organizational policy and requirements for hiring of a professional engineer in the event they operate a vessel in the future.

The 108-foot-long tall wooden replica of the original 18th century HMS *Bounty* set sail on October 25, 2012 from New London, Connecticut, for St. Petersburg, Florida, into the forecasted path of Superstorm Sandy, just one day after the closely watched storm reached hurricane strength. On the morning of October 29, 2012, the ship began to take on water, forcing the crew to abandon ship in liferafts. The U.S. Coast Guard was able to rescue all but two of the *Bounty's* 16 crewmembers.

Hours after rescue operations had commenced, the coast guard recovered the body of a crewmember who was found wearing an immersion suit. The Captain's body was never recovered.

The Coast Guard investigation report follows the NTSB's incident report released in February, which found that the captain's "reckless decision to sail into the well-forecasted path of Hurricane Sandy" was the probable cause.

Coast Guard Report Blames Captain, Crew For Sinking *Bounty*

[NBC News](#), June 13, 2014

The U.S. Coast Guard on Thursday released its final report on the sinking of the tall ship *Bounty* off the coast of North Carolina during Hurricane Sandy two years ago.

The investigation placed much of the blame on the captain of the ship, Robin Walbridge — who remains missing and is presumed dead. Another member of the 16-person crew was also confirmed dead.

The report says that “a combination of faulty management and crew risk assessment procedures contributed to the sinking,” according to a statement from the Coast Guard.

“Specifically, the choosing to navigate a vessel in insufficient material condition in close proximity to an approaching hurricane with an inexperienced crew was highlighted.”

The “HMS Bounty” sails past the Chicago skyline 30 July, 2003 as the city of Chicago hosts the largest “Tall Ship” festival ever in the Great Lakes. More than 25 vessels sailed into Chicago to the shores of Lake Michigan to start the event.

October 25, 2012, the Bounty, a replica of the original 18th-century British Admiralty vessel of the same name, launched from New London, Connecticut, headed for Florida. The ship tried to take an easterly course to avoid Hurricane Sandy, which had formed three days earlier.

But October 29th, the ship was hit by the massive storm and the crew had to be rescued 123-miles off the coast of Cape Hatteras.

The ship had originally been constructed for MGM’s 1962 film “Mutiny on the Bounty” starring Marlon Brando and had also recently appeared in the Disney’s “Pirates of the Caribbean” franchise.

The 93-page report released Thursday recommended that the Coast Guard itself review existing policy for “attraction vessels.”

The HMS Bounty, a 180-foot sailboat, sinks in the Atlantic Ocean during Hurricane Sandy approximately 90 miles southeast of Hatteras, North Carolina, on Oct. 29, 2012.

In a similar report released in February, the National Transportation Safety Board said the Bounty’s captain made a “reckless decision to sail the vessel into the well-forecasted path of Hurricane Sandy.”

The organization that owned the Bounty has since folded, their website is down and a listed phone number was inactive.

Coast Guard: ‘Bounty’ Captain And Owners ‘Negligent’ For Fatal Sinking In Hurricane Sandy

[Tampa Bay \(FL\) Times](#), June 13, 2014

The Bounty, the tall ship that once called St. Petersburg home, sank Oct. 29, 2012, in Hurricane Sandy off the coast of North Carolina, killing two of the 16 members of the crew — deckhand Claudene Christian, 42, and St. Pete resident and captain Robin Walbridge, 63.

And it happened for lots of reasons, according to a report released Thursday by the U.S. Coast Guard. But the 93 pages can be summed up in just six words: The ship should not have sailed.

The Coast Guard’s report blames the HMS Bounty Organization and Walbridge.

The company in charge of the Bounty gave Walbridge something close to free rein, and the captain, who was in his 17th year as the master of the ship, did what he wanted.

The report points to “substantial evidence” that Walbridge, and the company, too, “through their actions or inactions, committed acts of negligence.” That Walbridge “chose to embark on this voyage knowing of the vessel’s defects, the magnitude of the storm, and the experience level of his short handed crew,” the report states, “is unconscionable.”

In aggregate, the report is blunt: The Bounty should not have sailed — not toward the storm that was accurately predicted to be historically big and destructive, not in an effort to get from New London, Conn., to St. Pete for two days of tours at the city’s pier, not on a shoestring budget in an aging, wooden ship in subpar shape with shoddy pieces of critical equipment, not with a small, mostly young and inexperienced crew no matter the extent of their devotion.

Back in February, the National Transportation Safety Board also blamed the captain, calling Walbridge “reckless.” The rest of the NTSB’s report was noteworthy primarily because of its brevity. The Coast Guard’s report is much more detailed. Both, though, are sure to be used by Christian’s family’s attorneys, who are preparing a lawsuit against the Bounty’s owner, Robert Hansen of Long Island, N.Y., and the organization.

Hansen didn’t testify at the Coast Guard’s hearings about the sinking in Portsmouth, Va., a year and a half ago, invoking his Fifth Amendment right, and he didn’t want to talk on Thursday, either. But Ralph Mellusi, one of the Christians’ attorneys, said the Coast Guard’s report in particular is “certainly a working blueprint with respect to moving ahead.”

A lot of what’s in the report was in the Times’ three-part series about the sinking published in October — rotting wood on the sides of the ship that either wasn’t fixed at all or was fixed quickly and cheaply; pumps that ranged from finicky to faulty; the meeting before the departure at which Walbridge told his crew about Sandy but understated its severity and offered them the chance if not the time to get off — but the Coast Guard’s findings do outline the chronology and the causes of the loss.

The Bounty was classified as a moored attraction vessel — essentially a tourist draw when tied to a dock — and therefore was subject to lenient inspection standards.

Walbridge sent a text message to a friend shortly after leaving New London — the Coast Guard redacted the name

of the recipient — in which he said the Bounty needed “to get east of it. I would not dare be anywhere close to land.”

That was before he changed course from trying to avoid Sandy out at sea to trying to squeeze between the storm and the shore.

Christian texted a friend around the same time saying they were “shorthanded” and “we are all doing two jobs at once.”

Walbridge emailed a friend the morning of the second day of the voyage: “Sandy looks like a mean one. Right now we are on a converging course. ... At times like this I think about the sailors 200 years ago. There are not signs in the sky, barometer is steady, winds are light.”

The conditions, of course, were not that way for long. Sandy had killed people in the Caribbean and was surging north. The Bounty’s pumps couldn’t keep up with the water coming through the wood, the water swamped the generators and engines, and the ship was helpless. The crew ended up overworked, under-rested, seasick, injured. Walbridge called for help much too late. Ditto for his order to abandon ship.

Christian’s body was found about 12 hours after the crew abandoned ship. The medical examiner’s report showed bruises and scrapes on her head and said the probable cause of death was drowning.

Walbridge was never found.

“It seemed that he had supreme confidence in himself” and the ship, the report concludes. “It can only be surmised that this confidence kept him from recognizing the very real dangers his decisions imposed on the ship and crew.” Walbridge’s “illogical” decisions, in the words of the report, “smacked of pride.”

The first, second and third mates are not cited or sanctioned, although the report notes that the engineer, Chris Barksdale, a self-employed handyman from Virginia, “did not have sufficient experience” “to adequately perform his duties.”

“I think the report was on target,” Barksdale said Thursday.

“I think it’s pretty damning,” fellow crew member Doug Faunt added. “Obviously, a lot of shortcuts were taken; obviously, we shouldn’t have been out there.”

U.S. Coast Guard Releases Tall Ship Bounty Report

[WVEC-TV Hampton Roads \(VA\)](#), June 13, 2014

UPDATE 6/12: “A combination of faulty management and crew risk assessment procedures contributed to the sinking [of Tall Ship Bounty],” according to a report released Thursday by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The report went on to say, “Specifically, choosing to navigate a vessel in insufficient material condition in close proximity to an approaching hurricane with an inexperienced crew.”

As a result of the investigation, the report recommends that the Coast Guard review the existing policy for attraction vessels, including vessel manning and operating status.

Read the report here

UPDATE 2/10: A captain’s “reckless decision to sail into the well-forecasted path of Hurricane Sandy” was the probable cause of the sinking of a ship off the North Carolina coast in October 2012, the National Transportation Safety Board said in a report released Monday.

The captain and one crewmember died in the accident. Three other crewmembers were seriously injured.

The 16-page report details how a mostly inexperienced crew – some injured from falls, others seasick and fatigued from the constant thrashing of 30-foot seas – struggled for many hours to keep the ship’s engines running and bilge pumps operating so the seawater filling the vessel would not overtake it.

Read the report here

PORTSMOUTH--The Coast Guard’s hearing on the Bounty concluded Thursday with Commander Kevin Carroll still at a loss for the decision by the captain to sail into an oncoming hurricane.

“I attended the Maritime Academy. I’ve served in the Coast Guard for 18 years and I’m trying to find one person to tell me a ship is safer at sea. I can’t do it,” said an incredulous Carroll.

For a second time in the hearing the Bounty’s Chief Mate John Svendsen answered questions about the readiness of the ship and the orders by Captain Robin Walbridge.

Svendsen says he spoke to Walbridge in private about his concern that the ship should not sail south from New London, CT into the path of Hurricane Sandy.

Svendsen says the captain had his mind set and was not open to suggestions.

“I was very assertive in my conversation and he was not receptive to any of the other options,” said Svendsen.

Other questions during Svendsen’s testimony were about rotten wood on the Bounty, a lack of safety drills by the crew and the readiness of a bilge pumping system that failed to keep the ship afloat in the storm.

SECRET SERVICE

Standing 2 Feet From The President Ought To Be More Exciting

By J.p. O'Malley

[NPR](#), June 13, 2014

Picture the following scenario: you are a Secret Service agent being paid to protect the President’s life, when suddenly you feel an urgent call of nature. Well, that’s exactly

what happened to Dan Emmett on a state visit to Europe with Bill Clinton during the 1990s.

In a newly revised edition of his 2012 memoir, *Within Arm's Length*, Emmett recalls pulling together a semblance of respectability as he met the Commander in Chief on the way back from the little boys' room after the unfortunate incident: "As I moved aside to allow him [in] I quickly thought of a cover for action and blurted out in my most professional voice, 'all clear sir.'" Emmett's matter-of-fact honesty helps the story stand out in what ends up being an unfortunately dull, drawn-out book.

It begins with the best of motives: Potentially taking a bullet for the President on a daily basis was never really a career move, Emmett explains in the opening chapter. But his course was set at eight years old, when he saw the news of John F. Kennedy's assassination on TV.

Two decades later, during the 1984 presidential election campaign, Emmett found himself in the role of protector for JFK's brother, Teddy Kennedy, who was on the campaign trail for Walter Mondale.

At a party in Cape Cod after the election campaign, Kennedy asked Emmett if he would like to take a tour of his late brother's home. And Emmett recreates this scene of walking through what was essentially a Kennedy shrine — frozen in time for two decades — with an intensely personal and intimate touch. It's another one of the book's rare standout moments.

While Emmett never openly admits to pulling the trigger on any would-be-assassins during his career, there are a few genuinely hairy moments. In an extremely disturbing passage, he describes a fraud bust in the Bronx during the 1980s, and how close he came to killing a young Latino boy whom he feared was holding a gun. "I thought that there would be less gore if I hit him center of mass rather than in the head," Emmett recalls dryly.

It turns out that the boy spoke no English and couldn't understand what Emmett was saying. And still, even after realizing the boy might have been killed due to a simple communication error, Emmett tells us that "in the world of law enforcement this incident was nothing special."

In these do or die situations, where vital decisions must be made in a matter of seconds, his unfiltered, no-nonsense approach can be bracing. But for the most part, Emmett's 21 years in the Secret Service (and six more in the CIA) don't make a very absorbing read.

When Emmett's not reminding us how many times he's worked a month straight without a day off, he's criticizing junior White House staffers. And then there are the moments when he's shooting straight — in an unfortunate fashion. Explaining his role as a Secret Service physical trainer, he sneers that "there were some weak sisters in the class, and I don't mean women."

Emmett approaches anything that doesn't fit into his alpha-male worldview with an endless stream of bad puns, clumsy similes and stereotypes. He describes an airport in Haiti as "like something out of a bad movie;" an unlikeable Jordanian government official becomes "someone who was capable of cutting a man's throat and leaving him for the vultures;" and JFK is compared to a Boeing 707 because, the author tells us, "both airplane and president were young, good looking, and in a hurry to get places."

The book's biggest problem is a lack of overarching narrative. Emmett bounces from vignette to vignette, and when he runs out of stories, he starts regaling the reader with details of foreign shopping trips, or the intricate processes of refueling the Secret Service limousine.

Emmett comes across as an old school, patriotic Southern tough guy with a love of the military, hard discipline, guns, religion, and people who can shut their mouths if they know what's good for them. Unfortunately, while that might make you a good government agent — and a colorful character — it doesn't necessarily make you a good storyteller.

Victims Of Fraud, Identity Theft Should Contact Secret Service

[Pacific \(GUM\) Daily News](#), June 13, 2014

TIPS TO DEAL WITH FRAUD

- To report an identity theft or credit card fraud to the Guam office of the Secret Service, call 472-7395.
- The Secret Service also advises victims to file a report with police. Credit card companies and banks may ask you to show proof you reported the fraud.
- Immediately contact your credit card issuers and get replacement cards with new account numbers. Ask that the old account be processed as "account closed at consumer's request" for credit record purposes.
- Keep a log of all conversations with authorities and financial entities.
- Call the fraud units of the three credit reporting bureaus. Report the theft of your credit cards and/or numbers. Ask that your accounts be flagged. Also, add a victim's statement to your report requesting they contact you to verify future credit applications. The following is a list of addresses and numbers to the three credit bureaus:
 - Equifax
Phone: (800) 997-2493
Online: www.equifax.com
 - Experian
Phone: (888) EXPERIAN (397-3742)
Online: www.experian.com
 - Trans Union Fraud Victim Assistance
Phone: (800) 680-7289
Online: www.transunion.com

NATIONAL PROTECTION AND PROGRAMS

Cyber Threats Put Energy Sector On Red Alert

By Laura Barron-Lopez

[The Hill](#), June 12, 2014

Officials working to protect the nation from online threats are casting a wide net as they seek to guard against hackers and foreign governments targeting the United States.

Lately the focus has shifted to the power lines and oil pipelines that crisscross the country, providing vital energy sources that could be hijacked for nefarious ends.

"Changes in technology with operational devices is really causing the industry to broaden its spectrum of possible threats," said Michael Gomez of KPMG, a tech firm that offers cybersecurity products to the energy industry.

"You can get an attack from almost any place now."

The control rooms, substations and devices used to manage the nation's power grid, oil and gas plants, refineries and pipelines are all digital now, putting them at greater risk of cyberattacks.

At the same time, attempts to infiltrate the energy sector are growing more frequent. Of the roughly 200 cases of hacking attacks the cybersecurity team at the Department of Homeland Security handled in 2013, more than 40 percent were in the energy sector, an agency report said.

"Out of all of the critical infrastructure sectors reporting attacks, the most vulnerable to attacks is the energy sector," Gomez said. "Not any single sector within the energy industry is outside the scope of recent cyberattacks."

Rising concern about cyberattacks fueled the Obama administration's move to issue security guidance for critical infrastructure providers.

The guidance focused on helping utilities and other energy sector organizations purchase technology to protect against attacks and improve reliability.

Lawmakers on Capitol Hill have pushed to establish additional cybersecurity standards through legislation, but have yet to send legislation to President Obama's desk.

But the issue is getting fresh attention after documents containing classified information about an attack on a California electric substation were leaked to The Wall Street Journal. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee convened a hearing in April to examine the case.

"I am most concerned about coordinated physical and cyberattacks intended to disable elements of the power grid or deny electricity to specific targets, such as government or business centers, military installations, or other infrastructures," Gerry Cauley, president of the North American Electric Reliability Corp. (NERC) told the Senate Energy Committee in April.

The Senate Intelligence Committee is looking to move forward on legislation that would remove liability hurdles that prevent companies from sharing information with each other about cyber threats.

Similar legislation passed the House, but has yet to see action in the upper chamber.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) has been front and center in discussions with energy companies about how to best protect themselves.

"I've been trying to put an urgency behind all of it," Murkowski told The Hill. "But what we are trying to do is get the industry to move voluntarily so we don't have to have mandates and requirements."

Right now, the electric power sector is the only part of the energy industry that is subject to mandatory cybersecurity standards.

Congress approved the mandates in 2005, putting the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in charge of cyber standards for electric power that are routinely updated.

FERC issued version five of the standards this year. The rules directed utilities to be more specific about protections for devices that are used in control rooms, and for devices across the network that are temporarily plugged in, such as laptops and cellphones.

Companies managing the electric grid have made progress, and say they are continually enhancing their protections.

Paul Stockton, a former assistant secretary with the Defense Department who now works for the security firm Sonecon Inc., said the electric sector is on it's game when it comes to cybersecurity preparedness, information sharing and security investments.

More progress is vital, however, Stockton said.

There need to be solid goals for utility regulators, and more detailed criteria on how to assess the likelihood and sophistication of threats, Stockton said.

Another weak spot, Stockton said, is the ability of the electric grid to withstand and recover from simultaneous hits on cyber and physical elements of the infrastructure.

Still, the United States has remained relatively free of successful attacks on the grid.

The most devastating attacks to date have been inflicted on the oil and gas sector.

In 2011, China-based hackers targeted international oil and energy companies in cyberattacks dubbed "night dragon."

And in 2012, cyber hackers tried to halt all oil production in Saudi Arabia by attacking the operations of Aramco. The breach damaged 30,000 computers.

While the U.S. has remained relatively free of catastrophic attacks, that doesn't mean the sector's security precautions are foolproof.

Experts say America's record of avoiding an attack is part luck, part diligence.

Last year, the oil and gas sector formed its own Information Sharing and Analysis Center, allowing companies to share cybersecurity tips, threats, sophistication, and more with each other.

It's one step toward helping make oil and gas companies more resilient, but the industry will need to continually adapt in order to keep pace with changes in technology.

"Are we a ticking time bomb? Absolutely," Gomez from KPMG said.

"If we don't stay vigilant and we don't try to stay ahead of what the possibilities are and we don't communicate and don't work with entities such as the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and the NERC, and we stop communicating and try to attack this by ourselves, then something bad will happen, and you could say it would be catastrophic."

TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

Bill Would Prohibit Gitmo Transfers

By Cristina Marcos

[The Hill](#), June 13, 2014

A Republican bill would criminalize the transfer of Guantánamo Bay detainees to the U.S.

The prohibition outlined in the measure introduced by Reps. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) and Frank Wolf (R-Va.) would be in effect through 2017. Anyone found to assist in the transfer of a Guantánamo detainee would face up to five years in prison.

However, the bill would not apply to detainees who are American citizens.

Blackburn said the controversial exchange of Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban members detained at the U.S.-run facility in Cuba necessitated a long-term prohibition.

"The Bergdahl swap involving the transfer of five senior Taliban detainees to a beach resort in Qatar was not only illegal, it put a bounty on the head of every brave man and woman serving our country overseas," Blackburn said.

Wolf argued that terrorist suspects detained at Guantánamo Bay should not be entitled to the same legal rights as Americans.

"The detainees at Guantánamo were not arrested in the United States; they are terrorists who want to kill Americans. Bringing them to the U.S. would provide them with constitutional protections that they are not entitled to," Wolf said.

Blackburn and Wolf's bill would prevent Congress from having to fight over prohibiting detainee transfers in annual appropriations bills each year Guantánamo is open.

Two of the 2015 appropriations bills passed by the House, military construction-Veterans Affairs and Commerce-Justice-science, include provisions that bar the administration from using funds to house or transfer Guantánamo Bay detainees.

Rep. Jim Moran (D-Va.) offered an amendment to the Commerce-Justice-science bill that would have eliminated the provision that prohibits transfers of Guantánamo detainees to the U.S. But it was defeated 169-230.

U.S. Quietly Moves Detainees Out Of Secretive Afghanistan Prison

By Missy Ryan

[Reuters](#), June 12, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Embassy Audit finds Improper Vetting Of Security Contractors

By Karen Deyoung

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

A newly completed internal audit of security contracts at U.S. embassies abroad found that none of those examined had fully complied with vetting and other requirements for contractors who provide the first line of defense against attack.

The audit, to be released Friday by the State Department's Inspector General, was conducted in the wake of the 2012 attacks on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, that left four Americans dead. Local guards contracted to secure the perimeter and entry to the diplomatic compound there were found to have fled or failed to perform their duties.

Of six embassies selected for review based on location and terrorism threat level, "none . . . fully performed all vetting requirements" for local guards, placing "embassies and personnel at risk," the inspector general audit said. Chief diplomatic security officers at five of the six were said to have performed "inadequate oversight" of local guard vetting.

The performance of local security guards was a significant factor raised by the State Department's Accountability Review Board examination of the Benghazi incident. The ARB report said that security dependence on a local Libyan militia and an inexperienced British-based firm that hired local guards was "misplaced."

At the time of the visit to Benghazi of U.S. ambassador to Libya J. Christopher Stevens, one of the four Americans killed in the attack, militia guards had stopped accompanying official vehicle movements because of a dispute over pay and hours, the ARB report said.

An investigation of the Benghazi attack by the Senate Intelligence Committee found that the U.S. mission had been

vandalized and attacked in the months prior to the fatal assault by some of the same guards who were there to protect it.

The new inspector general audit was ordered “to determine whether security contractors had complied with Local Guard Program contract requirements for vetting the suitability of local guards at posts overseas and whether Regional Security Officers had performed adequate oversight of the local guard vetting process,” the audit said.

Although the names of the six embassies reviewed were redacted from the 49-page audit and annexes, it said they were chosen in Africa, Europe and Latin America based on “the estimated number of local guards employed and the terrorist threat level as of March 20, 2013,” among other factors.”

In redacted replies, security chiefs at each of the embassies agreed to recommended changes in their procedures.

The audit noted that compliance had been completed in about half of the recommendations and the rest were in progress but still undocumented by the embassies.

The State Department hires local guards to augment U.S. security “because of growing security threats at posts worldwide,” the audit said. Most “secure access to posts and provide building and residential security.” As of 2012, the total bill for such hires worldwide was about \$556 million. In March 2013, the audit said, there were 100 active local hire security contracts worldwide.

Under a contract process centralized in Washington since 2008, vetting requirements for every prospective guard include “a police check covering criminal and/or subversive activities, a credit check, proof of successful previous employment with supervisor recommendations, and a personal residence check.”

Results must be individually approved by the RSO, the head of the embassy security office.

The audit found that 173 local guards at one embassy and about 100 at another were placed on duty by contractors before meeting vetting requirements. At a third embassy, 18 guards were placed on duty before being cleared by the embassy’s security office.

Many of the guard files were incomplete. At five of the six embassies, it said, RSOs “frequently could not demonstrate that they had reviewed or approved the local guards employed to protect their posts,” and that the process for approving guards for duty varied among the embassies.

In one instance, it said, a local guard was assigned to an embassy “for months before his criminal history and use of multiple false identities was discovered.”

At another embassy, the audit determined that a contractor was collecting as much as \$1.48 million over a three-year period in wages that were not being paid to guards.

Inspector general visits to the embassies and relevant State Department offices were conducted between March and September last year, although all files were reviewed for all guards who had worked under contracts at the selected posts since October 2010.

In addition to redaction of references to specific embassies, six full pages of the document, titled “Outline for Action,” are listed as “unclassified” but are blacked out in their entirety.

In its response to inspector general recommendations, one of the posts said that checks of financial information about prospective hires were illegal under privacy laws of the country in question, and said that it had “no alternate means to conduct a credit check.”

Fears In East Africa Over World Cup Attack Threat

[AFP](#), June 13, 2014

Kampala (AFP) – East African nations were on high alert Thursday over fears that Somalia’s Al-Qaeda-linked Shebab rebels may launch attacks on World Cup screenings.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, whose country is a key contributor to African Union forces fighting the Shebab in Somalia, cautioned fans “to be alert as they enjoy football, bearing in mind that the country is threatened”.

A statement said Ugandan security forces had been urged to screen people to avoid a repeat of attacks four years ago during the World Cup final, when Shebab militants killed at least 76 people in the bombing of two restaurants in the Ugandan capital.

In Kenya, police chief David Kimaiyo promised “sufficient security measures” to ensure fans were safe, but said bar owners must take their own precautions.

“Owners of such social places must ensure that every person is thoroughly screened before entering their premises,” he said in a statement.

Britain this week released warnings to citizens in several East African nations – including Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya, who all have troops in Somalia – speaking of the threat of attacks at public screenings of the World Cup.

“Previous terrorist attacks in the region have targeted places where football matches are being viewed,” Britain’s Foreign Office said, adding that crowded areas including “transport hubs, hotels, restaurants and bars” are also possible targets.

The Foreign Office singled out Djibouti as a major risk, saying Shebab insurgents were planning further attacks in the Horn of Africa nation against target that include “Western interests.”

Last month at least one person was killed and several wounded when two suicide bombers blew themselves up in a

restaurant in Djibouti, the first attack in the country to be claimed by the Shebab since it joined the AU force in 2011.

As well as almost daily attacks inside Somalia, the Shebab have also carried out attacks against other troop contributing nations, including including last September's siege of Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall in which at least 67 people were killed.

OTHER CYBER NEWS

U.S. Telecom Chief Tells Industry To Lead On Cybersecurity

By Alina Selyukh

[Reuters](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

FCC Head Wants Businesses To Step Up Online Security

By Julian Hatten

[The Hill](#), June 13, 2014

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler wants companies to up their game and take the lead on warding off hackers.

Wheeler on Thursday called for a "new paradigm" where private businesses take the reins and understand "how easily cyber threats cross corporate and international boundaries," but also where the FCC stands as a backstop in case companies don't hold up their end of the bargain.

The Internet grows too quickly for government agencies to set the rules of the road, he said, but online users need more security than blind trust in the market.

"We believe there is a new regulatory paradigm where the commission relies on industry and the market first, while preserving other options if that approach is unsuccessful," Wheeler said in remarks at a forum on cybersecurity at the American Enterprise Institute.

Smart cars, refrigerators and other devices, he said, on the so-called "Internet of things" are leading to billions of new ways for hackers to sneak in and attack individual and corporate networks. As technology evolves, so will online attackers.

"We live in an age when a few smart 20 year-olds in somebody's garage can render standard technology obsolete within months," Wheeler said. "And the same is true for the pace of threat technology."

"The pace of innovation on the Internet is much, much faster than the pace of a notice-and-comment rule-making."

To help the effort, the commission is taking a close look at its rules to make it easier for companies to share information about hacker threats and weak points in their

systems, Wheeler said. A panel of more than 100 experts is also working on ways that TV, radio and other communications companies can take advantage of a Commerce Department framework for protecting their networks from attacks.

The call was quickly cheered by a Comcast executive, who said the company considers online security "a key component of our overall enterprise risk management."

"We have and will continue to be committed to taking a leadership role in establishing practices that meet the dynamic and ever-changing nature of these threats," senior vice president Myrna Soto said in a statement after the speech.

Part of Wheeler's stance is due to the practical limits of the FCC.

The five-member commission can take years to finalize regulations, and high-profile issues like its rules on net neutrality, the idea that all traffic online should be treated equally, can get roped up in political bickering.

FCC Urges Industry-Led Approach On Cybersecurity

Warns Such an Approach Must Be 'Demonstrably Effective' Against Online Threats

By Gautham Nagesh

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

U.S. Cybersecurity Firm Offers Free Protection For Political Blogs

By Gerry Shih, Reuters

[Reuters](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

House Intel Chief 'extremely Optimistic' On Cyber Bill's Chances

By Julian Hatten

[The Hill](#), June 12, 2014

The head of the House Intelligence Committee thinks the odds are good that the Senate will pass a long-delayed cybersecurity bill this year.

After a meeting with leaders of the Senate Intelligence panel on Wednesday, Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) said his hopes for action soon have returned.

"That was one of the most productive meetings I thought we had this year on this issue, and I am back to being extremely optimistic that we are going to get a cyber sharing bill this year," Rogers said during an event at the American Enterprise Institute on Thursday.

"I am very, very encouraged by this meeting yesterday."

The House last April passed legislation to allow companies to share information about possible cyber threats with each other and the government, which advocates have said is necessary to make sure that possible hackers and online terrorists do not go unnoticed.

"Wouldn't it be great if we could have them share this really nasty stuff in a classified way?" Rogers said.

The effort in the Senate was largely stalled by 2013's revelations from Edward Snowden, but Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and ranking member Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) this year announced that they had reached an agreement to move forward.

The legislation has yet to be formally introduced, but Rogers has previously said that the upper chamber needs to act by August in order to get it to the president's desk by the end of the year.

The effort is likely to run into opposition from civil liberties advocates, who have worried that it would allow businesses to shuttle information about consumers to the National Security Agency and other arms of government.

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

Obama Administration Pushing Local Cops To Stay Mum On Surveillance

By Ashley Alman

[Huffington Post](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration has been quietly advising local police not to disclose details about surveillance technology they are using to sweep up basic cellphone data from entire neighborhoods, The Associated Press has learned.

Citing security reasons, the U.S. has intervened in routine state public records cases and criminal trials regarding use of the technology. This has resulted in police departments withholding materials or heavily censoring documents in rare instances when they disclose any about the purchase and use of such powerful surveillance equipment.

Federal involvement in local open records proceedings is unusual. It comes at a time when President Barack Obama has said he welcomes a debate on government surveillance and called for more transparency about spying in the wake of disclosures about classified federal surveillance programs.

One well-known type of this surveillance equipment is known as a Stingray, an innovative way for law enforcement to track cellphones used by suspects and gather evidence. The equipment tricks cellphones into identifying some of their owners' account information, like a unique subscriber number, and transmitting data to police as if it were a phone

company's tower. That allows police to obtain cellphone information without having to ask for help from service providers, such as Verizon or AT&T, and can locate a phone without the user even making a call or sending a text message.

But without more details about how the technology works and under what circumstances it's used, it's unclear whether the technology might violate a person's constitutional rights or whether it's a good investment of taxpayer dollars.

Interviews, court records and public-records requests show the Obama administration is asking agencies to withhold common information about the equipment, such as how the technology is used and how to turn it on. That pushback has come in the form of FBI affidavits and consultation in local criminal cases.

"These extreme secrecy efforts are in relation to very controversial, local government surveillance practices using highly invasive technology," said Nathan Freed Wessler, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, which has fought for the release of these types of records. "If public participation means anything, people should have the facts about what the government is doing to them."

Harris Corp., a key manufacturer of this equipment, built a secrecy element into its authorization agreement with the Federal Communications Commission in 2011. That authorization has an unusual requirement: that local law enforcement "coordinate with the FBI the acquisition and use of the equipment." Companies like Harris need FCC authorization in order to sell wireless equipment that could interfere with radio frequencies.

A spokesman from Harris Corp. said the company will not discuss its products for the Defense Department and law enforcement agencies, although public filings showed government sales of communications systems such as the Stingray accounted for nearly one-third of its \$5 billion in revenue. "As a government contractor, our solutions are regulated and their use is restricted," spokesman Jim Burke said.

Local police agencies have been denying access to records about this surveillance equipment under state public records laws. Agencies in San Diego, Chicago and Oakland County, Michigan, for instance, declined to tell the AP what devices they purchased, how much they cost and with whom they shared information. San Diego police released a heavily censored purchasing document. Oakland officials said police-secrecy exemptions and attorney-client privilege keep their hands tied. It was unclear whether the Obama administration interfered in the AP requests.

"It's troubling to think the FBI can just trump the state's open records law," said Ginger McCall, director of the open government project at the Electronic Privacy Information Center. McCall suspects the surveillance would not pass constitutional muster.

"The vast amount of information it sweeps in is totally irrelevant to the investigation," she said.

A court case challenging the public release of information from the Tucson Police Department includes an affidavit from an FBI special agent, Bradley Morrison, who said the disclosure would "result in the FBI's inability to protect the public from terrorism and other criminal activity because through public disclosures, this technology has been rendered essentially useless for future investigations."

Morrison said revealing any information about the technology would violate a federal homeland security law about information-sharing and arms-control laws — legal arguments that outside lawyers and transparency experts said are specious and don't comport with court cases on the U.S. Freedom of Information Act.

The FBI did not answer questions about its role in states' open records proceedings.

But a former Justice Department official said the federal government should be making this argument in federal court, not a state level where different public records laws apply.

"The federal government appears to be attempting to assert a federal interest in the information being sought, but it's going about it the wrong way," said Dan Metcalfe, the former director of the Justice Department's office of information and privacy. Currently Metcalfe is the executive director of American University's law school Collaboration on Government Secrecy project.

A criminal case in Tallahassee cites the same homeland security laws in Morrison's affidavit, court records show, and prosecutors told the court they consulted with the FBI to keep portions of a transcript sealed. That transcript, released earlier this month, revealed that Stingrays "force" cellphones to register their location and identifying information with the police device and enables officers to track calls whenever the phone is on.

One law enforcement official familiar with the Tucson lawsuit, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak about internal discussions, said federal lawyers told Tucson police they couldn't hand over a PowerPoint presentation made by local officers about how to operate the Stingray device. Federal officials forwarded Morrison's affidavit for use in the Tucson police department's reply to the lawsuit, rather than requesting the case be moved to federal court.

In Sarasota, Florida, the U.S. Marshals Service confiscated local records on the use of the surveillance equipment, removing the documents from the reach of Florida's expansive open-records law after the ACLU asked under Florida law to see the documents. The ACLU has asked a judge to intervene. The Marshals Service said it deputized the officer as a federal agent and therefore the records weren't accessible under Florida law.

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Former NSA Director Backs House Bill To Rein In Spy Agency

By Stephen Dinan

[Washington Times](#), June 13, 2014

The NSA's former director said Thursday that given the current threat level and al Qaeda's capabilities, he is comfortable with the slimmed-down bill that passed the House last month canceling the spy agency's ability to do bulk data collection — but Americans will have to accept a trade-off in security.

Both Michael Hayden, who was National Security Agency director at the beginning of the Bush administration, and David Medine, the chairman of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, also said they support creating an independent advocate to argue on behalf of average Americans' interests to the secret court that oversees the bulk collection and other intelligence programs.

The two men appeared alongside Sen. Mike Lee and two top officials from the American Civil Liberties Union at a panel on privacy sponsored by The Washington Times, the ACLU and Microsoft. Times Opinion Editor David Keene moderated the discussion, which saw Mr. Hayden say the NSA can live within the new constraints — but the public will see a drop in security.

"Draw the box, we'll play inside the smaller box," the former Air Force general said. "By increasing your comfort level, you've also almost certainly increased your danger level. But as long as you're comfortable with that, that's the social contract. That's the way democracies work."

Cellphone Tracking Cannot Trample The Fourth Amendment

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

The capacity of cellphones to track people's movements and provide a vivid picture of their private lives poses a substantial and growing threat to privacy.

That is why a federal appeals court ruling on Wednesday restricting the government's access to location data stored by cellphone companies is so important. In a case involving a man convicted of several robberies in South Florida, the United States Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit said law enforcement agencies could get location records from cellphone companies only if they first obtained a probable cause warrant from a judge.

The United States attorney's office in Miami had built a case against Quartavious Davis partly on the basis of records obtained from his cellphone company showing where he had used his phone over 67 days. The records placed him at the

site of the robberies. Prosecutors got access to the data after obtaining an order from a federal magistrate judge by demonstrating that the information was “relevant and material” to their investigation, which is easier to demonstrate than probable cause.

The appeals court did not overturn the conviction because, it said, the government had acted in good faith by first obtaining a court order. But, significantly, it also ruled that “cell site location information is within the subscriber’s reasonable expectation of privacy” under the Fourth Amendment, protecting people “against unreasonable searches and seizures.” This ruling was based in part on a 2012 Supreme Court ruling that said placing a tracking device on a suspect’s car constituted a search under the Fourth Amendment.

The decision breaks from previous appellate rulings siding with the government and ordering phone companies to provide location information under the Stored Communications Act, without a warrant. Many legal experts believe the Supreme Court will ultimately have to step in and resolve the disagreements.

Some lawmakers are not waiting for the high court to act. Maine, Minnesota, Montana and Utah, among other states, have adopted laws that require government agencies to obtain warrants to get access to historical location data from cellphone companies and to track people through their phones in real time. In Congress, Senator Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, and Representative Jason Chaffetz, Republican of Utah, have introduced federal legislation that would also require warrants for location data.

As Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in a concurring opinion in the 2012 Supreme Court case, *United States v. Jones*, location data provides “a precise, comprehensive record of a person’s public movements that reflects a wealth of detail about her familial, political, professional, religious, and sexual associations.” Judges and lawmakers must make sure that technology is not improperly used to get around Fourth Amendment protections.

Privacy In America Panel Convenes A Year After Snowden

By Rem Rieder

[USA Today](#), June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON — It’s a question Sen. Mike Lee hears all the time.

You’re a conservative, people will tell the Utah Republican. How can you be critical of the rampant surveillance by the National Security Agency?

But there’s no contradiction there in Lee’s view. It’s more like a natural outgrowth of his beliefs.

“Some of the programs threaten to undermine privacy,” Lee says, adding that the federal government is simply too intrusive.

“The ultimate question is not if, but whether, and how badly (the programs) will be abused.”

Lee was the kickoff speaker at a panel discussion roughly a year after the first revelations of widespread government snooping in classified documents leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden. The colloquy, titled *Privacy in America: The NSA, the Constitution and the USA Freedom Act*, was sponsored by Microsoft, the ACLU and The Washington Times.

The Snowden disclosures have led triggered public concern about the impact of government surveillance on privacy. President Obama has called for reform, and legislation is working its way through Congress.

But totally unapologetic was one of the panelists, Mike Hayden, a former head of the NSA and the CIA.

Hayden, who said the panel’s title should have included security as well as privacy, asserted several times that there have been no abuses in the collection of telephone records of ordinary American citizens not suspected of terrorism as well as the scooping up of e-mail in another program. He said the U.S. has “the most transparent intelligence system on the planet.”

Hayden said he can go along with the chief reform in the USA Freedom Act backed by Lee and passed by the House, which would end the NSA’s bulk collection of telephone records. Instead, they would be stored by phone companies, and the NSA could request court approval for certain records using search terms.

But Hayden said that wouldn’t have been good enough in the dangerous days after 9/11, when the program was created as part of the Patriot Act. “By increasing your comfort level, you are increasing your danger level,” he said.

The bill passed by the House in May was so watered down that a number of its proponents, including Reform Government Surveillance — a coalition that includes Facebook, Google and Apple as well as Microsoft — dropped their support. They were particularly concerned about a broadening of the definition of the “specific selection term” the NSA would use when it seeks records from the phone companies. They fear it is so elastic that it would allow the agency to have continued access to bulk records.

Privacy advocates have asked the Senate to strengthen the bill when it takes it up.

David Medine, chairman of the federal Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, said his group had found that the bulk collection of telephone records was not an effective tool in the battle against terrorism.

And Laura Murphy, director of the ACLU’s Washington Legislative Office, said the “breadth of data” the government has been collecting is “a bridge too far.”

"Is this the kind of America we want to live in?" she asked.

Key Lawmakers Open To Giving Some Antiaircraft Weapons To Syrian Rebels

By Adam Entous

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

After Lull, US Drone Strikes Kill 13 In Pakistan

By Asif Shahzad And Rebecca Santana

[Associated Press](#), June 12, 2014

ISLAMABAD (AP) – Missiles from U.S. drones slammed into militant hideouts overnight in northwestern Pakistan, killing 13 suspected insurgents and marking the resumption of the CIA-led program after a nearly six-month break, officials said Thursday.

The strikes were swiftly condemned by the Pakistani government, with the Foreign Ministry saying in a statement that they were a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and its territorial integrity.

The strikes came just days after a five-hour siege of Pakistan's busiest airport ended with 36 people, including ten militants, killed. The audacious attack raised concerns about whether Pakistan was capable of dealing with the Pakistani Taliban, which said it carried out the assault along with an Uzbek militant group.

It was not immediately clear if the drone strikes were connected to the airport attack. Pakistan routinely condemns drone strikes even when they target armed groups at war with the government.

The Pakistani government had asked the U.S. to refrain from drone strikes while it was trying to negotiate a peace deal with the militants, but even before the airport siege those talks had largely collapsed.

Now the focus has shifted to whether Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will authorize a large-scale military offensive against the North Waziristan tribal areas where the militants are headquartered.

In the first strike, which came late Wednesday, a suspected American drone fired two missiles at a militant hideout in North Waziristan near the Afghan border, killing three militants.

Then, early Thursday, another suspected U.S. missile strike targeted a separate militant compound in North Waziristan, killing at least 10 people, Pakistani intelligence officials said.

Pakistan's northwest, particularly North Waziristan, is home to numerous militant groups – both local and al-Qaida-linked foreign groups – who often work together, sharing fighters, money or expertise.

There was no immediate information on the identities of those killed in the operation but the two intelligence officials who gave information about the strikes said both were in areas dominated by the Haqqani network, and most of those killed are believed to have belonged to the organization.

"We have also been hearing some names coming from our field agents, but we don't have any confirmation so far," said one of the officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

The Haqqani network is believed to carry out operations against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan from bases in North Waziristan and is considered one of the more lethal groups operating in Afghanistan. They are also believed to have been the organization holding Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, an American prisoner of war recently released in exchange for five Taliban prisoners held by the U.S.

Due to stricter rules on the use of drones, diplomatic sensitivities and the changing nature of the al-Qaida threat, the number of American drone strikes had dwindled. The strikes Wednesday and Thursday were the first since Christmas, and even before that, the number of strikes every year had been steadily dropping.

The Pakistani government and military are believed to have supported the drone strikes to a degree in the past but in recent years have become more vocal in their opposition. The strikes are extremely controversial in Pakistan, where many people consider them a violation of the country's sovereignty.

Meanwhile, a Pakistani court on Thursday struck down a government order barring former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, who faces treason charges, from leaving the country. The government can still appeal.

The ruling by the Karachi court could pave the way for the man who ruled Pakistan for nearly a decade to leave the country after an embarrassing trial that saw him become the first chief of army staff to face treason charges.

It also puts the Pakistani government, whose decision to push for Musharraf's trial put it at odds with the powerful military, in a tricky position where it must decide whether it wants to further anger the military by trying to keep Musharraf from leaving the country.

Under the Karachi court ruling, the government has 15 days to appeal the decision, so Musharraf can't leave Pakistan immediately. The court gave no reason for striking Musharraf's name from the exit control list, which prevents people from leaving the country, usually in legal cases.

The 70-year-old Musharraf took power in a 1999 coup and then stepped down in 2008. He later left the country, but returned to Pakistan in March 2013, hoping for a political comeback.

Instead, he got embroiled in court cases, including the treason charges, which are connected to his decision in 2007

to declare a state of emergency and detain senior judges, including the chief justice.

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U.S. Drone Hits Pakistan For 2nd Time In 12 Hours

By Declan Walsh And Ismail Khan
[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

LONDON — An American drone struck a militant compound in Pakistan's tribal belt for the second time in 12 hours on Thursday, killing at least 10 suspected members of the Haqqani network in a suddenly intense resurgence of the C.I.A. offensive in Pakistan.

The American drone strikes, after an almost six-month lull in the operations while Pakistani officials tried and failed to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban, come as Pakistan is mulling a new offensive of its own against militants in the northwestern tribal belt. But early news reports on Thursday offered conflicting comments about whether the Pakistani authorities might have approved the drone strikes or worked in tandem with the Americans — a politically caustic idea in a country where the C.I.A. program is widely hated.

The strikes, both of which were reported to have killed Haqqani operatives, also came two weeks after the release of the American soldier Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who had been a hostage of the Haqqanis for five years. A former American military commander has suggested that Sergeant Bergdahl's safety will give the United States more freedom to strike at the Haqqanis, who are fighting to overthrow the American-backed civilian government in Afghanistan.

Pakistani security officials said Thursday that a C.I.A. drone had fired six missiles at the compound four miles north of Miram Shah, the main town in North Waziristan. The attack, which occurred just after 2 a.m. on Thursday, targeted a building and an explosives-laden truck parked outside, they said.

Seven hours earlier, an American attack on the same compound had killed at least four people. Initial reports from that attack described the dead as mostly ethnic Uzbek fighters, but the second strike appeared to have been aimed squarely at the Haqqani militants.

The Haqqani group, led by Sirajuddin Haqqani, has carried out numerous attacks on American and Afghan security forces, as well as hotels and embassies in Kabul, the Afghan capital. The group's strength derives in part from its sanctuary in North Waziristan, where it is believed to have held Sergeant Bergdahl for much of his five years in captivity, until his release on May 31 in exchange for five Taliban commanders held at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

The attacks on Wednesday and Thursday were an emphatic resumption of the American drone program in Pakistan's tribal belt after a nearly six-month hiatus. The last known C.I.A. strike inside Pakistan took place on Dec. 25.

American drone strikes are deeply unpopular in Pakistan and are usually met with vehement criticism from the government, which on Thursday issued a pro forma statement that condemned both attacks as a "violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity." Still, the strike received no mention from lawmakers during national assembly proceedings on Thursday.

In private, some Pakistani officials say they quietly support drone strikes when they suit Pakistan's perceived self-interest. On Thursday, Reuters quoted two unnamed Pakistani government officials who described the latest strikes as a "joint Pakistan-U.S. operation" that, they said, had the "express approval" of the Pakistani government.

But a senior Pakistani security official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, insisted that the actions did not have prior approval from the Pakistani authorities.

The long lull in C.I.A. strikes coincided with a concerted effort by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government to draw the Pakistani Taliban into peace talks. But that effort has all but collapsed in recent weeks, undercut by tensions between Mr. Sharif and the military leadership and by a damaging leadership split in the Taliban ranks.

Moreover, an audacious Taliban assault on the Karachi airport on Sunday, resulting in 36 deaths, bolstered public support for a military operation. Any military operation is a political risk for Mr. Sharif, who fears a violent backlash in his home province, Punjab. His main political rival, the former cricket star Imran Khan, has been a strident critic of both American drone strikes and Pakistani military operations.

But in the days since the Karachi attack, military officials have hinted that plans are underway for a major operation, most likely in Waziristan. And the collapse of peace talks with the Taliban forced even Mr. Khan to concede, some weeks earlier, that force should be used against militants who refuse to lay down their weapons.

The Pakistani Taliban presented the Karachi airport assault as a joint operation with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which has firmly established itself in the jihadi firmament of Waziristan since September 2011. Pakistani officials said that at least three Uzbek fighters died in the C.I.A. strike on Wednesday night.

Declan Walsh reported from London, and Ismail Khan from Peshawar, Pakistan. Salman Masood contributed reporting from Islamabad, Pakistan.

US Drone Strike In Pakistan Killed Senior Afghan Militant, Others

By Qasim Nauman And Safdar Dawar

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Afghans Tighten Security As Taliban Threaten Vote

By Amir Shah And Rahim Faiez

[Associated Press](#), June 12, 2014

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) – Afghan police and soldiers manned checkpoints at almost every intersection Thursday, searching vehicles and frisking drivers in a massive security operation ahead of elections to choose a new president to guide the country after international combat forces withdraw.

Insurgents fighting the Western-backed government have intensified attacks ahead of Saturday's runoff vote, and the Taliban issued a new statement warning voters to stay away from the polls. The first round in April passed relatively peacefully, but a recent assassination attempt against one of the two presidential hopefuls left in the race has stoked fears of more violence to come.

"The Islamic Emirate deems it necessary to alert the people and warn them for the last time that they should not participate in this American process, deliberately or inadvertently," the Taliban said Wednesday in a statement posted online.

Still, the senior U.N. envoy for Afghanistan expressed confidence Afghan voters would turn out as they did in the first round to decide their future by picking a new leader to oversee the transition after most U.S. and allied forces pull out by the end of this year.

Jan Kubis, the U.N. secretary general's special representative for Afghanistan, also called on the candidates to give electoral authorities time to tally the ballots – most of which will come from remote regions, often transported by donkeys – and resolve any complaints amid widespread fears of fraud.

"Give a chance to due process, respect the work of the Commissions, don't jump to conclusions," he said. "Don't make statements or comments in anticipation of the results. It will just mislead the people. Control yourself, act as responsible politicians."

He was referring to the likelihood that the campaigns of front-runner Abdullah Abdullah, the target of last week's attack, and former Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai will start releasing their internal tallies before formal results are announced.

The official timetable is for preliminary results to be announced on July 2 and final results on July 22 in order to allow time for ballots to be secured and fraud complaints investigated.

The stakes are high as the winner will replace President Hamid Karzai, a one-time U.S. ally whose relations with

Washington have soured, in the first peaceful democratic transfer of power in the country's history.

Karzai has governed Afghanistan since the Taliban were ousted following the U.S. invasion in 2001, and is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term.

Karzai on Thursday called on Afghans to vote for the candidate of their choice in order to bring about a "stable, secure and developed future" for the war-ravaged country.

"The security forces of our country are fully ready to ensure security with the help of you, the people, for the election," he said in a statement.

The Obama administration is watching closely. Both candidates have pledged to sign a security pact with the U.S. that would allow thousands of international forces to stay in Afghanistan in a largely training and advisory capacity. Karzai has refused to sign it.

Afghan security forces were widely praised for the April 5 elections, which were held without major violence despite a series of deadly attacks in the weeks beforehand.

Karzai held a video conference with commanders Thursday to urge them to remain impartial and refrain from interfering in the second round balloting.

Traffic was snarled even more than usual on the streets of Kabul as police set up extra checkpoints and barriers on many roads to allow only one car through at a time. They also searched many drivers and passengers for possible explosives or other weapons.

The Afghan Interior Ministry announced that it was banning most trucks and people from other provinces from entering the capital on Election Day.

"Trucks loaded with vegetables that are in danger of being spoiled will be allowed to enter the city after a very careful search process by police," it said.

The Cabinet also has approved a week off for school and university students that began Tuesday because of security issues.

A suicide bomber on a motorcycle killed a police officer Thursday in the southern city of Kandahar, according to Dawa Khan Menapal, a spokesman for the Kandahar provincial government.

Elsewhere in the south, Taliban insurgents attacked several police checkpoints and killed nine police officers on Wednesday in Khas Uruzgan district of Uruzgan province, a provincial official confirmed on Thursday.

Dost Mohammad Nayab, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said reinforcements had arrived and were searching for the attackers. A Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, claimed responsibility for the attack in Uruzgan province.

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Obama Praises Security Cooperation With Australia

By Matthew Pennington

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama on Thursday praised ally Australia as a trusted military partner whose cooperation is providing the U.S. with added reach in the Asia-Pacific, but questions lingered about their differences on climate change.

Obama spoke to reporters after a one-hour meeting with Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who thanked Obama for the deeper engagement by the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific region. He said Australia will be “an utterly dependable ally of the United States.”

It was Abbott’s first White House visit since he was elected in September. The two leaders also discussed world security hotspots, their two countries’ involvement in a proposed trans-Pacific free trade pact and maritime disputes between China and Southeast Asian neighbors in the South China Sea.

“Obviously, both the United States and Australia have enormous trade relationships with China, and we both agree that it’s important to continue to see China prosper and rise, but what’s also important is that as China emerges as this great world power, that it also is helping to reinforce and abide by basic international law and norms,” Obama said.

Australia is hosting a new deployment of U.S. Marines — a concrete outcome of the Obama administration’s so-called Asia pivot. The two sides announced Thursday further defense cooperation and the possibility of Australian contributions to missile defense in the region.

Obama said he and Abbott were improving the military relationship between the two countries that is giving the United States “additional reach throughout this very important part of the world,” and he noted that under Abbott, the Australian government has increased its defense budget.

Obama described Australia as one of a handful of countries that the U.S. can always count on. “And Aussies know how to fight, and I like having them in a foxhole if we’re in trouble. So I can’t think of a better partner,” he said.

The two leaders appear less in step, however, on the issue of climate change.

Neither leader mentioned it in their brief comments to reporters. But White House spokesman Jay Carney said they did discuss climate change in their private session and that Obama emphasized the need for countries to adopt “ambitious domestic climate policies as the basis of a strong international response.” He said Obama believes climate change should be discussed in November’s meeting of the Group of 20 industrialized and developing countries. Australia, which currently chairs the group, will host the meeting.

Last week, Obama announced bold plans to cut carbon dioxide emissions from power plants by nearly a third by 2030 from 2005 levels. The U.S. policy is intended to galvanize the response to global warming and spur emerging economies like China to take action.

Abbott has described those as sensible steps but has made clear that he doesn’t view the fight against global warming as a top priority and is set against action that could crimp Australian business. He plans to scrap Australia’s carbon tax on polluters and instead provide taxpayer-funded incentives for polluters to reduce their emissions.

In remarks to reporters Tuesday after visiting the New York Stock Exchange, Abbott said: “Is it (climate change) the most important issue the world faces right now? I don’t believe so. It is one of a number of significant issues that the world faces, and we will do our bit.”

Australian media have reported that Abbott is seeking to forge an alliance among right-leaning governments such as Britain and Canada — where he visited before arriving in the U.S. — and push against global moves to introduce raising costs of carbon emissions.

Australia is one of the world’s worst pollution emitters per capita, largely because it relies heavily on abundant reserves of cheap coal for electricity. The U.S. is the biggest source of global carbon dioxide emissions after China.

Associated Press writer Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, contributed to this report.

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Australia PM Vows To Be ‘Most Dependable Friend’ To US

By Shaun Tandon

[AFP](#), June 13, 2014

Washington (AFP) — US President Barack Obama said Thursday that he envisioned greater defense cooperation with Australia in a tension-filled Asia, welcoming Prime Minister Tony Abbott despite differences on climate change.

In the conservative leader’s first White House summit since his election in September, Abbott said that Australia “will be an utterly indispensable ally” of the United States and welcomed Obama’s efforts to shift more US attention on Asia.

Obama praised Abbott for increasing Australia’s defense budget in tough economic times, calling the move a recognition that “we all have to make sure that we’re doing our fair share to help maintain global order and security.”

“We don’t have a better friend in the world, as well as the Asia-Pacific region, than Australia,” Obama told reporters after the Oval Office meeting.

Obama agreed with Australia's previous government to send some 2,500 US Marines by 2016-2017 to the northern city of Darwin, which lies strategically close to hotspots in Southeast Asia.

Obama said that the United States and Australia have since then worked out force postures "that will enhance the bilateral cooperation between our militaries and give us additional reach throughout this very important part of the world."

A White House statement said that the United States and Australia were looking to expand cooperation in "maritime capacity building" and humanitarian relief in Asia.

– Differences on climate change –

Obama called Australia "one of my favorite countries to visit" and said he looked forward to traveling to Brisbane in November for the summit of the Group of 20 major economies.

But Abbott, who comes from the opposite end of the political spectrum, has previously resisted calls by the Obama administration to make climate change a top priority at the summit.

Obama just last week laid out his most ambitious plan yet to reduce carbon emissions blamed for climate change.

Abbott has called the science behind climate change "absolute crap" and moved to undo environmental policies of his predecessor Kevin Rudd, who was one of Obama's closest international allies.

Obama raised climate change in the meeting and wants the issue to be on the agenda in Brisbane, White House press secretary Jay Carney said.

The White House statement said that the United States and Australia "recognize the pressing need to address climate change, a serious issue that requires a strong and effective international response."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a UN-led scientific panel, has warned that polluters need to make major, urgent cuts in carbon emissions if the planet is to reduce worst-case consequences such as rising sea levels, drought and more frequent disasters.

– Enforcing 'rules' in Asia –

The US-Australia summit comes amid growing tensions in Asia, with Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam accusing China of increasingly assertive moves on maritime disputes.

Obama and Abbott both said that they embraced China's rise but would hold firm on principles. Obama said it was important for a growing China to "abide by basic international law and norms."

Abbott, speaking earlier at the US Chamber of Commerce, said that Australia sought close relations with countries throughout Asia, including frequent rivals Japan and China.

"It helps that, in most circumstances, Australia is strong enough to be useful but not big enough to be threatening," Abbott said.

"I am confident that the coming century will indeed be the Asian century, but only if America is there too to keep the peace and enforce the rules," Abbott said.

Iran Would Resume Enrichment If Nuclear Talks Fail: Minister

[Reuters](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Building Nuclear Weapon Would Take Years, Not Months, Iran Says In Report

By David E. Sanger

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — The Iranian government this week published its first detailed study of how long it estimates it would take its scientists and engineers to assemble a nuclear weapon, saying that with its current infrastructure, "the required time span is in years."

Iran described the estimate as entirely hypothetical, and it was clearly intended to allay fears that Iran has the ability to race for a bomb. Not surprisingly, American officials immediately disputed the conclusions, which contradicted both classified assessments by the United States government and many estimates by outside experts.

But the very fact that Iran's nuclear energy establishment wrote the eight-page report, titled "How Long Would an Iranian 'Breakout' Really Take?" was itself notable. Until now, Iran's public position has been that its program is entirely peaceful and that it has never studied what it would take to amass the fuel for a weapon, which is known in the nuclear world as "breakout."

In private, according to American negotiators, the Iranians have long disputed estimates that it would take only two months or so to produce enough weapons-grade uranium, and perhaps another year, plus or minus a number of months, to fashion it into a weapon.

The report was issued as Iranian officials were announcing that they had agreed to change the design of a heavy water reactor near the Iranian city of Arak in ways that would limit Iran's ability to forge a second path to a bomb, using plutonium. American officials said they were studying the new proposal, but saw it as a hopeful sign.

This week, two officials who last year met secretly with the Iranians to get negotiations underway — William J. Burns, the deputy secretary of state, and Jake Sullivan, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s national security adviser — met again with their Iranian counterparts, trying to get the

negotiations back on track before a July 20 deadline for a final agreement. The State Department has said almost nothing about the content of the discussion, other than that it was “constructive.”

Talks between Iran and the six nations discussing a possible deal resume next week in Vienna.

The United States argues that much of Iran's infrastructure for producing nuclear fuel must be dismantled to significantly extend the time that Iran would need to produce a weapon. The Iranians talk of more than doubling their current number of centrifuges, which produce uranium. France's foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, put the issue succinctly this week when he was quoted in French news reports as saying, “We say that there can be a few hundred centrifuges, but the Iranians want thousands.”

“It's a huge gap,” one senior official involved in the talks said on Thursday, “that reflects the American insistence that we can't live with the status quo and the Iranian insistence that they want to be able to produce all their own civilian nuclear fuel,” even for reactors Tehran is years away from building. American officials declined to be quoted by name discussing the report.

As a result, both American and Iranian officials say they believe the discussions will almost certainly go beyond the initial deadline. Under the terms of their temporary deal, which froze and rolled back some Iranian nuclear activity in return for modest relief from trade sanctions, a six-month extension of the negotiations is possible.

Iran's report was cited in a Twitter post by the country's chief negotiator, Javad Zarif, who said it punctured the myth about a breakout, which he said could derail any negotiation.

The report quoted the American official who Iranians say is the chief mythmaker: Secretary of State John Kerry. In April, testifying before the Senate, Mr. Kerry said, “I think it is public knowledge today that we are operating with a time period for a so-called breakout of about two months.” He said that had to be extended if the United States and its allies were to have enough warning to react.

“Six months to 12 months is — I am not saying that is what we would settle for, but even that is significantly more,” he said. That figure rattled some Israeli officials, who say they would insist on much more warning time. Israel and the United States have debated the issue for months.

“The Iranian strategy to reach a nuclear bomb is to do it not as fast as possible,” said Amos Yadlin, the former chief of Israeli military intelligence in Israel. Iran, he said, wants to do it “as safely as possible,” meaning in a way that would not provoke a military response. Mr. Yadlin is now the executive director of Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

The Iranians argue that Mr. Kerry is alarmist and that it will take far longer — at least 18 months, maybe 42. But the Iranian report understates the number of centrifuges Iran has in place: It notes that the country has “some 9,000,” citing

reports by international inspectors. That is the number currently running, the inspection reports say, but another 10,000 have been installed.

To Americans, “breakout time” refers to the number of months Iran would need to produce enough fuel for a single weapon. Most of the Iranian report deals with the whole process of producing fuel and then making it into a weapon.

American officials note that many of those processes could happen simultaneously, reducing the amount of time needed.

Growing Iran Oil Exports Challenge U.S. Nuclear Sanctions

By Indira A.R. Lakshmanan And Anthony Dipola
[Bloomberg News](#), June 13, 2014

Iran's oil exports have risen this year, according to Bloomberg calculations, a trend that threatens to violate U.S. sanctions on the Islamic Republic's main source of revenue.

Shipments of Iranian crude oil and condensate have increased about 28 percent on average this year, according to an analysis of customs data from importing nations and figures from the International Energy Agency in Paris. If crude sales are up by the end of July, that would break an international accord to hold Iran's oil exports at the same level in the first half of this year that they were at in the previous six months.

Questioned in Congress yesterday about possible sanctions violations, an Obama administration official who monitors Iran's oil exports said he's confident Iranian crude shipments have remained within the limits set in a six-month agreement signed Jan. 20 that granted Iran limited sanctions relief in exchange for some nuclear concessions.

“Where we are today, we feel comfortable that the crude oil exports of Iran are remaining in the 1 million to 1.1 million barrels per day average,” Amos Hochstein, deputy assistant secretary of state for energy diplomacy, testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The U.S. Congress passed legislation in December 2011 to curtail Iran's oil exports in an effort to deprive the Persian Gulf state of its leading foreign revenue earner, to pressure its leaders to accept constraints on a suspected nuclear weapons program. A month later, the European Union approved an embargo on Iranian oil purchases by its members.

Only six buyers are still allowed to take crude from Iran — China, India, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and Taiwan — down from 21 before the restrictions went into effect in mid-2012.

Among the reasons that exports in the first few months of this year look higher are seasonal variations in oil purchases and the fact that reporting lags shipments and

customs data are sometimes revised, according to two U.S. officials who weren't authorized to be quoted.

Another reason is that while India's crude imports from Iran were up significantly in the first few months of this year, its refiners have signed contracts for lower purchases in the coming months, which should bring down Iran's average exports by July, the officials said.

The Obama administration says Iran's oil exports have been reduced by more than half from 2.5 million barrels a day before sanctions. The U.S. also says Iran is losing as much as \$5 billion a month in oil revenue.

Customs and other publicly available data, though, show that Iran's exports of crude and condensates rose to an average of 1.33 million barrels a day in the first four months of this year from 1.04 million barrels a day on average in 2013, according to Bloomberg calculations.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh, asked by a reporter at an OPEC meeting in Vienna yesterday, gave a higher figure, saying the Persian Gulf producer is exporting 1.2 million barrels of crude oil and 300,000 barrels of condensate a day.

U.S. officials say Iran consistently inflates trade figures to create an illusion that sanctions are crumbling.

Using customs and ship-tracking data to assess Iran's oil export quantities is complicated by the fact that crude and condensates can be transported by the same type of tanker or blended together and that some countries combine the two in their import data.

Condensate, a light petroleum liquid often found with oil or gas, is not restricted by U.S. sanctions as long as the buyer nation was granted a waiver from the sanctions by reducing the amount of crude oil it buys from Iran.

China has considerably increased its purchases of Iranian condensate this year, and that has inflated overall import figures, according to the two Obama administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity. U.S. officials say Iran may be offering China and other customers significant discounts on condensate and crude in an attempt to keep sales flowing despite punishing sanctions.

Although Iran exports condensate in much smaller quantities than crude oil, the product fetches higher prices because it's easier and less expensive to refine into gasoline or diesel fuel.

Richard Mallinson, an analyst at Energy Aspects Ltd., a London-based consultancy, said Iran is set to sell an average of more than 1.3 million barrels of crude oil and condensates a day in the first half of the year, up from last year's combined average of 1.06 million barrels, he said.

"However you choose to define it, exports are running higher than they did last year," Mallinson said in a phone interview. "What's become clear is that for the U.S., achieving a comprehensive deal" to curb Iran's nuclear program "is too

valuable to risk over the fact that Iran's oil exports will be more than the desired levels."

Mark Dubowitz, executive director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington, who's advised Congress on ways to tighten sanctions against Iran, said lenient enforcement of oil sanctions during the negotiations sends a bad message.

"If this is an example of how strictly they will enforce any final nuclear agreement with Iran, then Iran should feel more confident that they will be able to exploit any loopholes with impunity," he said.

At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing today, several members expressed concern that Iran may be circumventing sanctions, just as it may intend to bypass any negotiated restraints on its nuclear program if a final deal is reached. Committee chairman Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, credited international sanctions as the "single most influential" reason that Iran is still at the nuclear negotiating table.

Questioned at yesterday's House hearing by Representative Ted Deutch, a Florida Democrat, the State Department's Hochstein explained that while most publicly available figures count crude and condensate together, the U.S. government has more accurate measures for determining if countries buying crude from Iran are complying with U.S. sanctions.

"We have a lot of concerns, we are actively engaging, but we believe that countries have kept tight," Hochstein said.

Hochstein also said that due to sanctions, payments for Iran's oil aren't made in hard currency; they're still going into local-currency escrow accounts that Iran's government may use only to buy goods in the importing nation.

"They are not getting the money and the access to the cash," Hochstein said. "That money is still going to accounts that are blocked in those countries and have to remain, under certain conditions, in those countries."

China, which remains the biggest buyer of Iranian crude and showed the largest increase in purchases this year, is a U.S. partner in negotiations aimed at constraining Iran's nuclear activities. Sanctioning oil buyers such as China by blocking their banks from the U.S. financial system could derail international unity in negotiations on a nuclear accord.

"Having a little more Iranian oil than was expected at the beginning of the year has been helpful," Mallinson said. "We haven't seen the usual mid-year price slide, which shows we came into the year quite tight. Iran pumping more crude did help, but not enough to bring down oil prices."

West Texas Intermediate rose to an eight-month high of \$106.53 a barrel today and Brent crude surged to \$113.02 a barrel as violence escalated across northern and central Iraq, increasing the prospect of a return to civil war in OPEC's second-biggest oil producer. Iran, previously OPEC's No. 2 producer, slipped to fourth place after sanctions took effect.

Deutch and Florida Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen also challenged Hochstein over reports that Iran this year has begun exporting oil to longtime ally Syria.

"Over the last few months, Iran has begun to direct shipments of crude oil to Syria for the first time" because Syria's regime can no longer buy crude on the open market, Hochstein said. "But that is a very different kind of delivery," he added, because Iran is giving the oil to its embattled ally for free. "This doesn't contribute to the overall economic benefit to Iran."

China remained the biggest buyer of Iranian oil, importing an average of 620,710 barrels a day of crude and condensate in the first four months of the year, according to customs data from the world's largest energy importer. The country, which imported an average of 430,585 barrels of crude and condensate a day last year, also accounted for the biggest increase in imports of Iranian fuel.

The next round of talks between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S. – plus Germany is scheduled to start June 16 in Vienna.

This week, senior U.S. officials held bilateral discussions with Iranian officials in Geneva in an effort to press Iran to be more realistic in its demands for a civilian nuclear program and assess whether it's feasible to reach a final deal before the interim agreement expires July 20. Both sides have said an extension of the current deal is possible.

Iran says its nuclear program is only for civilian energy and medical research. The U.S. and other world powers accuse Iran of seeking a nuclear weapons capability.

Bloomberg's calculations for Iranian exports use data from the International Energy Agency for India because that country's customs figures were not available for this year. Turkey's averages purchases are based on data for the first three months of the year provided by Turkey's government. Taiwan said it hasn't imported any Iranian crude yet this year.

The following is a table of purchases of Iranian crude and condensate calculated from customs and import data provided by national authorities in each of the buyers listed:

Buyer	Jan.-April 2014	2013	China	620,710	430,585
India	316,250*	178,182**	Japan	151,252	180,106
South Korea	134,383	132,093	Turkey	107,726***	105,545
Taiwan	0	15,373	Total	1,330,321	1,041,884

* data from IEA ** April-Dec. 2013 *** Jan-March 2014

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Why Higher Iran Oil Exports Are Not Roiling Nuclear Deal

By Arshad Mohammed And Timothy Gardner

[Reuters](#), June 13, 2014

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NATIONAL NEWS

Why Barack Obama Can't Get Out Of Iraq

By Edward-Isaac Dove

[Politico](#), June 13, 2014

President Barack Obama finally found a strategy to get out of Afghanistan. Now he's getting pulled back into Iraq.

Scrambling Obama's attempt just two weeks ago to move American foreign policy past Bush-era Middle East engagements, the Al Qaeda linked insurgency that's capturing city after Iraqi city threatens to drag him into a back into an old conflict that could hang over the rest of his term.

For a president who has started thinking about his legacy, that would mean hitting rewind on one of his most significant achievements and getting entangled in a civil war in a country that most Americans wanted to leave behind.

The situation has all the makings of another potential foreign policy mess for the White House, which in the past year has faced crises in Ukraine, Syria, Iran and embarrassment over NSA spying on foreign leaders.

Obama said Thursday in the Oval Office that he wouldn't "rule anything out"—but the White House rushed to make sure people realized he'd already ruled out ground troops.

As Obama's pointed out repeatedly, the American public is deeply opposed to new military entanglements—especially in the Middle East.

"We're not going to be able to be everywhere all the time, but what we can do is to make sure that we are consistently helping finance, train, advise military forces with partner countries, including Iraq, that have the capacity to maintain their own security," Obama said.

He later urged Congress to approve more funding to be able to "extend our reach without sending U.S. troops to play whack-a-mole wherever there's a problem."

As he spoke, Islamic militants continued their march toward Baghdad, with Mosul and Tikrit already in their control and a humanitarian crisis speeding a full social and economic collapse. Over 500,000 refugees fled from Mosul alone, leaving the frantic Iraqi government begging for help as it explores curfews and new censorship rules.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Thursday afternoon that America contractors in Iraq are being

moved out by their employers, though American embassy and consulate staff are remaining in place.

For Obama, who was propelled through the 2008 campaign in large part on his opposition to the original Iraq invasion, the current situation is particularly problematic. He's not the only one: Mosul and Tirkat have now fallen in a week when Hillary Clinton tried to, once and for all, put her 2002 Iraq authorization vote behind her.

"I got it wrong. Plain and simple," she wrote in her new book, "Hard Choices," released Tuesday.

The situation gets even more complicated given Obama's history in Syria, where he's been calling for President Bashar Assad to go for years but unwilling to do anything to further that along before or after his brief misadventure with Congress in September. The insurgent group, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, draws from both countries, and has published pictures of operatives destroying the sand berm that served as part of the border.

The resurgence of a group with links to Al Qaeda in itself presents a problem for Obama, especially as Republicans try to keep attention of the five Taliban prisoner-swap for Bergdahl, which House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) Thursday said represents the new Obama Doctrine: "America is willing to make deals with terrorists."

After writhing through the infighting since House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's (R-Va.) shocker primary defeat, Republicans rushed to attack and mock Obama for what was happening in Iraq.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), the White House's most persistent foreign policy critic, headed to the Senate floor to lead the charge Thursday, quoting himself from years past to say he's been right all along.

"Could all of this have been avoided? The answer is absolutely yes," McCain said, calling for the president's entire national security team to be fired and warning of Obama, "he's about to make the same mistake in Afghanistan he made in Iraq."

"This is the education of Barack Obama, but it's coming at a very high cost to the Syrian people to the Iraqi people [and] to the American national interest," said Doug Feith, a top Pentagon official during the George W. Bush administration.

"They were pretty blasé," Feith said of the Obama team. "The president didn't take seriously the warnings of what would happen if we withdrew and he liked the political benefits of being able to say that we're completely out."

Congress hadn't been paying much attention until then.

Wednesday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee heard from both the current ambassador to Iraq and the nominee to succeed him and didn't ask about the violence, nor did the House Armed Services Committee when holding a hearing with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel about Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl's release.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-Mich.) said the swift movement in Iraq "caught everybody by surprise" – including congressional committees, leaders and the U.S. intelligence community.

"Everybody that we heard from what caught by surprise," he said after receiving a classified briefing from the administration on the situation Thursday.

And it was Congress that rebuffed Obama's attempts to authorize strikes against Syria, even as he argued that the Ghouta gas attack a few weeks earlier should shake the international community.

Thursday, Obama tried to map out a path for American involvement he and the public would be ready to support.

"We do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria for that matter," Obama said.

"We have been providing them additional assistance," Obama said. "That includes in some cases military equipment, that includes intelligence, in some cases that includes a whole host of issues but what we've seen over the last couple of days is that Iraq's going to need more help — it's going to need more help from us, and it's going to need more help from the international community."

But despite this rhetoric, Defense Department officials made clear in a briefing with reporters Thursday morning that they are not actually doing anything different beyond hoping to "expedite" the lease and sale of some AH-64 Apaches, but they will not say when they'd arrive or even how much more quickly the process would be.

"The problem is not advice, the problem is not arms and equipment. They've got a load of this stuff... They've got very nice uniforms, if you've seen them. The problem is they don't fight," said Les Gelb, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations. "The issue is who are you fighting for? What are you fighting for? There's nothing to fight for because they don't believe in the government."

Defense officials would not discuss any planning for airstrikes, nor whether the legal authority to carry them out already existed.

White House press secretary Jay Carney said the administration will continue to brief leaders on the Hill, as officials did Thursday morning, but did not say if the president would need congressional authority to act in Iraq as he said he needed in Syria.

The situation is a long way from 2010, when Vice President Joe Biden in early 2010 predicted "could be one of the great achievements of this administration."

That was before the administration failed in 2011 to reach an agreement with the Iraqi government for a continued American presence in the country (not unlike the Bilateral Security Agreement that Obama is counting on the new Afghan president to sign). Instead, the White House instead celebrated the last line of armed personnel vehicles to leave

Iraq, rolling over the border to Kuwait after nine years, \$800 billion, nearly 4,500 killed and 32,000 wounded.

Denis McDonough, then a deputy national security adviser and now Obama's chief of staff, defended the pull-out, insisting in one 2011 interview that "it's not a question of what exactly we did or did not get from the Iraqis."

Disputing the idea that Americans and Iraqis hadn't been able to settle on a number of troops to stay in country, McDonough said in another interview, "I think you've seen the president demonstrate that we can protect our interests without basing a lot of troops overseas."

Feith said Obama should consider now sending in the residual force that he was proposing in 2011, even if some see it as a retreat from the pledges that carried him into office more than five years ago, cautioning war-weary American that they can't wash their hands of the region.

"If you could ship that whole part of the world to outer space, then that's perfectly OK," he said. "If Al Qaeda is taking over countries like Iraq, the idea that that's not going to effect the security, the economy and the quality life of Americans is not realistic."

Obama Weighs Direct Action Against Insurgents In Iraq

By Paul Richter, David S. Cloud
[Los Angeles Times](#), June 12, 2014

Facing the threat of sectarian conflict engulfing the Middle East, President Obama indicated Thursday that he may order direct military action in Iraq, a step he has ruled out since the U.S. ended its long war there.

A number of former administration officials and private analysts have been urging drone or airstrikes on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an Al Qaeda-inspired militant group whose fighters were sweeping toward Baghdad. In an Oval Office appearance, Obama said the militants' gains indicate "Iraq's going to need more help" from the United States and other nations.

Asked whether he would consider airstrikes, Obama said "I don't rule out anything," adding that in the continuing U.S. collaboration with the Iraqi government "there will be some short-term immediate things that need to be done militarily."

Other U.S. officials have said they do not foresee combat troops returning to Iraq.

An order of U.S. airstrikes would mark a dramatic shift for the administration, which has insisted for years that Iraq has been capable since the 2011 U.S. military departure of guaranteeing its own security.

But ISIS appears poised to control most of the formerly Sunni Muslim areas of the country, up to the outer suburbs of Baghdad, as well as territory in eastern Syria. Its advances raise the threat of sectarian war that could lead to the

disintegration of Iraq and the destabilizing of U.S. allies such as Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

ISIS fighters fanned out in several directions Thursday from their new stronghold in Mosul, capturing the town of Sinjar to the west near the Syrian border and extending their reach as far south as Tarmiya, just 30 miles outside Baghdad. The militants already control much of the territory north and west of central Iraq, as well as the longtime Sunni insurgent strongholds of Fallouja, Ramadi, Tikrit and Anbar province.

Many Iraqi army troops left their positions ahead of the ISIS sweep, abandoning their weapons and armored vehicles to the invaders. Masked militants were seen driving around Mosul in a U.S.-made Humvees and trucks mounted with anti-aircraft guns after raiding the government's stores of weapons and vehicles.

Elsewhere, forces of the Iraqi Kurds rushed to defend the oil-rich disputed city of Kirkuk from ISIS insurgents, further sharpening fear that the country would break into its Kurdish, Shiite Muslim and Sunni areas.

Three planeloads of Americans, mostly contractors, were being evacuated from the city of Balad, about an hour northwest of Baghdad, where they had been involved in a program to train Iraqi forces on American military equipment, the Associated Press reported.

The Middle East has been increasingly riven by a sectarian divide between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, with Sunni-led Saudi Arabia wrestling for regional influence with Shiite-dominated Iran. Al Qaeda and its affiliates and splinter groups are Sunni; Iran has expanded Shiite influence through such groups as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Obama is under pressure to step up U.S. action in part because other players, such as Iran, Turkey and the Persian Gulf states, may decide they need to become more active if Washington hangs back. The U.S. desperately wants to avoid a deeper Iranian influence in Iraq, at a time when Tehran's power is already considerable.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has already signaled a keen interest in halting the Sunni militants' advances, this week urging Shiite men to take up arms to stop it. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani cut short a speech Thursday in Tehran, saying he had to meet with his National Security Council on the events in Iraq.

"We will not be silent," Rouhani said, warning that Iran will "confront perpetrators of violence and brutality in the region."

Unconfirmed reports said that Iranian forces were already engaged in the effort to counter ISIS in Iraq.

"Obama's first thought has been: 'I don't want to become hostage to these events in the Middle East,'" said Robert Danin, a longtime U.S. diplomat in the Middle East

who is now with the Council on Foreign Relations. "But the more he tries to leave it the more it sucks him back in."

The administration has been increasing arms aid, intelligence sharing and training to the Iraqis, yet the Iraqi security force remains weak and ineffective, and many outside analysts believe that even a sharp increase of current U.S. activities would not shift the balance any time soon.

The United States lost 4,486 troops in the war, which most Americans say in polls was not worth the cost. The last forces withdrew at the end of 2011 after the U.S. and Iraqi governments failed to agree on a deal that would have authorized a U.S. force to remain in Iraq to help protect it.

"Absent immediate airstrikes, the country could go down the drain in a dramatic fashion," said James Jeffrey, a former U.S. Army officer who was Obama's ambassador to Iraq in the first term. "The risk here is that the militants take all the Sunni areas and besiege Baghdad, the Iranians come, and the Kurds decide to break away."

Despite Obama's words, some analysts said that the president, in dealing with the Syrian civil war, has often implied that he was preparing direct military action and then done less than expected. The arming of the moderate Syrian opposition has always been slower and less substantial than expected, they noted.

Obama threatened action against Syria if it crossed a "red line" of deploying chemical weapons, then held back when evidence emerged that Syrian President Bashar Assad had done just that.

Obama's language "sounds like the kind of smoke screen they've always put up to excuse inaction," said Kenneth Pollack, a Mideast specialist at the Brookings Institution who encouraged President George W. Bush to invade Iraq and has continued to urge a more active U.S. approach.

U.S. Central Command, which would carry out any military operation in Iraq, has been looking at options for airstrikes and other military moves short of putting in large numbers of ground troops to slow the militants' advance, but the planning "is not very advanced," said a senior U.S. military officer, who agreed to discuss the deliberations in return for anonymity.

Options include Air Force Reaper drones armed with bombs and missiles, as well as fighter jets, to attack militants on the ground, the official said. There are hundreds of U.S. fighters, bombers and refueling tankers based in the region, including in Qatar, that could begin flying operations over Iraq in a matter of days, the official said.

Since the Air Force would not have to worry about the enemy shooting down U.S. planes, there would be no need for initial bombing to destroy air defenses.

It's not clear yet whether Iraq's government is prepared to let U.S. aircraft fly from bases in its territory, or whether the White House is prepared to consider sending support

personnel and special operations teams to assist Iraq's military. Even without U.S. personnel in Iraq, the Air Force could quickly ramp up operations, the officer said.

"Can we have an impact? Sure," the officer said.

Obama could face strong pushback from Congress and other domestic leaders to direct military action.

One sign of the antiwar mood came from House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) who condemned Obama for allowing the militants' advance, urged the administration to provide the Iraqis the equipment and training they seek, yet demurred on airstrikes.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) said that though the Iraq situation was "troubling ... the American people have been exhausted with wars."

Iraq's former Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi, warned in an interview with the BBC against launching another foreign military intervention, saying airstrikes could "add fuel to the fire."

"The international community should seek another alternative to get out of this mess," he said. "It is not a matter of creating yet again a big war in and around Iraq."

Obama Warns Of U.S. Action As Jihadists Push On Baghdad

By Ahmed Rasheed And Isabel Coles

[Reuters](#), June 12, 2014

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Iraqi Kurds Take Oil City As Militants Push Forward

By Tim Arango, Suadad Al-Salhy And Rick Gladstone.

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

ERBIL, Iraq — Kurdish forces exploited the mayhem convulsing Iraq on Thursday to seize complete control of the strategic northern oil city of Kirkuk as government troops fled in the face of advancing Sunni militants. The insurgents pressed their advance southward toward Baghdad, warned officials of occupied Mosul to renounce allegiance to the central government and threatened to destroy religious shrines sacred to all Shiites.

At the same time, militias of Iraq's Shiite majority rushed to fill the vacuum left by the abrupt disintegration in the government's security forces, vowing to confront the Sunni militants, defend Baghdad and protect other threatened cities including Samarra, 70 miles north of the capital. Thousands of volunteers were reported mobilizing. "We hope that all the Shiite groups will come together and move as one man to protect Baghdad and the other Shiite areas," said Abu Mujahid, one of the militia leaders.

The Sunni militants, many aligned with the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria as well as loyalists to the old Saddam Hussein government swept from power by the American-led invasion a decade ago, have confronted the government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki with its worst crisis and threatened to plunge Iraq into a full-blown sectarian war. They routed government forces from the city of Mosul, Mr. Hussein's home city of Tikrit and smaller cities closer to Baghdad this week in a lightning advance. The disarray in Mr. Maliki's military, with many soldiers deserting and surrendering their American-made weapons and gear to the Sunni militants, has further compounded the crisis.

The swift capture of Mosul by militants, many of them from across the border in Syria, has underscored how the conflicts in Syria and Iraq have fused into a widening regional insurgency that jihadist militants have cast as the precursor to establishing an Islamic caliphate.

There were reports late on Thursday that units of Iraq's Air Force had conducted intensive strikes on western areas of Tikrit to drive out the Sunni militants, but there was no word on whether the effort had succeeded.

Earlier, a Sunni militant leader contacted in Tikrit said representatives of all the insurgent factions, including members of Saddam Hussein's tribe, had met privately there to formulate a plan for governing their newly won slice of northern Iraq and seek to reassure residents of Mosul, the country's second-largest city, that they could return to their homes and jobs. Tens of thousands of Mosul residents fled when the Sunni militants seized it on Tuesday.

Some residents who remained in Mosul reported on Thursday that militants used mosque loudspeakers and leaflets to invite all soldiers, police officers and other government loyalists to go to the mosques and renounce their allegiance to the Baghdad authorities or face death. The occupiers also banned sales of alcohol and cigarettes and ordered women to stay home.

"The apostates who served at the army and police and the other services, we tell them that the door of repentance is open for whoever wants it," the occupiers said in the leaflets. "But who insists on apostasy he will be killed."

Leaders of Iraq's Kurds, who have carved out their own autonomous enclave in northern Iraq, said their forces had taken full control of Kirkuk, as government troops abandoned their posts there. "The army disappeared," said Najmaldin Karim, the governor of Kirkuk.

Unlike the Iraqi Army, the Kurdish forces, known as pesh merga, are disciplined and loyal to their leaders and their cause: autonomy and eventual independence for a Kurdish state. With its oil riches, Kirkuk has long been at the center of a political and economic dispute between Kurds and successive Arab governments in Baghdad. The disappearance of the Iraqi Army from the city appeared to leave Kirkuk's fate in the Kurds' hands, and some Kurdish

politicians quickly sought to take advantage, arguing that it was a moment to permanently seize control of Kirkuk and surrounding lands.

"I hope that the Kurdish leadership will not miss this golden opportunity to bring Kurdish lands in the disputed territories back under Kurdish control," Shores Haji, a Kurdish member of Iraq's Parliament, was quoted as saying by Al Jazeera. "It is a very sad situation for Mosul, but at the same time, history has presented us with only one or two other moments at which we could regain our territory, and this is an opportunity we cannot ignore."

There were unconfirmed reports that Iran, an ally of Mr. Maliki's Shiite-led government, had sent Revolutionary Guards into Iraq to help him fight the Sunni militants. Iraqi Shiite militia leaders contacted in Baghdad said they knew of no such assistance from Iran, nor had they asked for any. "We have thousands of volunteers, some of them are well trained and experienced," said a Shiite militia leader who identified himself by his first name, Ali. "We do not need to get any troops from outside, neither the Americans nor the Iranians."

Iran's state-run news media reported earlier this week that the country had strengthened its forces along the Iraq border and suspended all pilgrim visas into Iraq but had received no request from Iraq for military help.

The Sunni insurgents, flush with success, bragged that they would advance to Baghdad and press into the Shiite-dominated south, home to the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf, among the holiest of Shiite Islam.

In a recording posted on militant websites, an insurgent spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, exhorted followers to march toward Baghdad and beyond because they "have an account to settle," according to a translation by The Associated Press.

The spokesman was also quoted as saying that a high-ranking insurgent commander known variously as Adnan Ismail Najm or Abu Abdul-Rahman al-Bilawi al-Anbari had died in the offensive.

According to Mr. Adnani, the commander had worked closely with the Jordanian-born former leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed by American troops in 2006.

The militant commanders are said to include Baathist military officers from the Hussein era, including Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, a former vice president and one of the few prominent Baathists to evade capture during the American-led occupation.

Mr. Douri took time out Thursday afternoon to visit the former dictator's grave in the town of Awja, about three miles from Tikrit, a militant leader said.

After overrunning Mosul and Tikrit, the insurgents poured down the main north-south highway to reach Samarra.

The city is home to a sacred Shiite shrine that was bombed in 2006 during the American-led occupation, igniting a sectarian civil war between the Sunni minority and the Shiite majority.

On the way, the insurgents were said to have taken positions in parts of the important refining town of Baiji, north of Tikrit, but there were conflicting accounts on Thursday as to who was in control there and whether the refinery was operating.

In Samarra on Thursday, witnesses said, militants who had been reinforced overnight by three columns of fighters in scores of vehicles were deployed in positions three miles east and north of the city. Other insurgents had pressed south to take the town of Dhuluiya, closer to Baghdad, while two predominantly Shiite towns in the region, Balad and Dujail, remained in Shiite hands as forward bases for attempts to halt the insurgents.

A senior militant commander said that, in Dhuluiya, insurgents overran an air force base. It was not clear whether aircraft had been stationed at the base.

The insurgents were also said to have captured an air force college, taking hundreds of prisoners among Shiites but allowing Sunni personnel and students to leave.

Separately, 49 Turkish citizens who were taken hostage after militants stormed the Turkish Consulate in Mosul on Wednesday were reported to be in good health and are expected to be released soon, a consulate employee told Turkish news media.

Tim Arango reported from Erbil, Suadad al-Salhy from Baghdad, and Rick Gladstone from New York. Alan Cowell contributed reporting from London, and Ceylan Yeginsu from Istanbul.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard Deploys To Iraq To Stop Sunni Terror Group

By Douglas Ernst

[Washington Times](#), June 13, 2014

With U.S. forces out of Iraq and the nation spinning out of control, the nation has turned to someone else to help quell the violence: the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

Two battalions of the Quds Forces have been sent to the advance of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an al Qaeda offshoot that took control of Iraq's second-largest city Mosul and Tikrit in recent days.

The Iraqi government has indicated that it would be open to U.S. airstrikes against the Sunni terrorist organization, the Wall Street Journal reported Thursday.

The influx of Quds Forces into Iraq comes less than a week after Qasem Sulaimani, the commander of the Quds Forces, arrived in Baghdad to assess the crisis, said a member of the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), the Journal reported.

"The more insecure and isolated Maliki becomes, the more he will need Iran. The growth of ISIS presents a serious threat to Iran. So it would not be surprising to see the Guards become more involved in Iraq," said Alireza Nader, a senior policy analyst at the Rand Corp, the Journal reported.

Iraq Girds To Defend Capital Baghdad

Move Comes as Forces of the Shiite-Dominated Government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki Abandon Posts and Flee, Provincial Official Says

By Ali A. Nabhan, Farnaz Fassihi, And Tamer El-Ghobashy

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

As Sunni Militants Threaten Its Allies In Baghdad, Iran Weighs Options

By Thomas Erdbrink

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

TEHRAN — In years past, Iranian officials would smirk when recalling how the United States had done the dirty work for them by removing the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, a Sunni who led an eight-year war against Shiite Iran.

To top it off, the American military actively helped an Iran-friendly government of Shiites to consolidate power and then voluntarily pulled out. With precious little investment, Iran had gained a critical ally.

But now, with Sunni extremists running roughshod over northern Iraq and heading for Baghdad, the situation is decidedly darker. Not only do fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria now pose a direct threat to the pro-Iranian government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, but they have promised to massacre Shiites and destroy their shrines in Najaf and Karbala.

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a spokesman for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, released a statement saying that the group worships a lord who spreads "terror" in the hearts of Shiites and "will force them to flee." He calls Mr. Maliki an "underwear merchant" and a "fool," and threatens to take the fight directly to the Shiite holy cities Najaf and Karbala, the burial sites of the founder of the Shiite faith, Imam Ali, and its greatest general, Imam Hossein.

"We need to settle our differences with you," the statement read. "These differences go back a long way. We will settle our differences not in Samarra or Baghdad, but in Karbala, the filth-ridden city, and in Najaf, the city of polytheism."

In the worst case, if Mr. Maliki were driven from power, the shrines were threatened and radical Sunni insurgents were killing Shiite civilians, Iran would more than likely be compelled to intervene, say experts close to Iran's leadership.

"They are our ally and we will help them," said Hamid Taraghi, a political analyst who is close to the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But exactly how Iran would do so is unclear.

Iran will more than likely busy itself with organizing Iraq's security forces and Shiite militias, analysts said, much as it has done in Syria. Its natural reaction will be to avoid any overt involvement, politicians and analysts point out, preferring to act through intermediaries, such as military advisers.

"Iran will be very careful about becoming directly involved in Iraq," said Mohammad Reza Noroozpoor, an Iranian journalist with close ties to several Iranian leaders. "There are plenty of Shiites in Iraq itself to fight these people."

Any form of direct involvement would come at a high price, with the largest Shiite country in the world becoming an active player in the growing sectarian conflict in the region.

"Numerous sites could potentially be destroyed or taken hostage by Sunni extremists. They are traps for us, as for any incident there the Shiite world will be looking to us for action," said one analyst, who asked not to be named because of his critical stance.

"We are in a dilemma. We are a Shiite country, but trying to be the leaders of the entire Muslim world. As a result we can't even act in our own backyard."

Undoubtedly, these issues were discussed by Iran's Supreme National Security Council, which held an emergency meeting on Thursday on how to deal with the militant offensive.

Security has been beefed up at the frontiers, and flights to Baghdad, ferrying hundreds of Shiite pilgrims each day, have been halted, leaving about 17,000 Iranians stranded in Iraq, an Iranian official told the state Islamic Republic News Agency on Wednesday.

"Our leaders are very concerned," Mr. Taraghi said. "They are closely monitoring events."

There have been reports that Iran's Revolutionary Guards have already sent troops to Iraq to fight alongside and help organize Shiite militias.

For now, though, those reports are unconfirmed, and Iran's political and religious establishment seems to be betting on the American-trained Iraqi security forces that abandoned the battlefield en masse this week when militant pickup trucks came rolling into Mosul.

In defiance of the crisis atmosphere, some analysts professed to see a silver lining in the week's events.

"These terrorists used some of Mr. Maliki's mistakes and plotted against him together with some local Iraqi Army commanders," said Mr. Noroozpoor. "But his forces will be able to regroup and regain control of those regions. Maliki might even be able to consolidate his power in this way."

Should the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria manage to consolidate its power in northern Iraq, Iran would be

confronted with the fresh headache of propping up yet another weak ally, along with Syria.

But there is a huge emotional difference between Iraq — the site of the defining battles of the Shiite faith and where the holiest of Shiite saints are buried — and the Syria of President Bashar al-Assad, more an ally of convenience, with only the shrine of Zeinab.

"I propose we help Iraq by repeating our good experience," said Hossein Sheikholeslami, an aide to the speaker of Parliament, Ali Larijani, and an important figure in Syrian affairs. "Of course, if they ask officially for our help we can send experts to train the trainers, just as we did in Syria."

Other analysts dismiss both the militants and the costs of intervening in Iraq.

"This group is not as big and powerful as they seem," said Mashallah Shamsolvazain, a reformist journalist and analyst of Arab affairs. "If needed, we can enter Iraq and wipe out ISIS easily, but that won't be necessary."

"Contrary to the Iraqis who are disorganized, Iran is fully prepared," Mr. Shamsolvazain said. "Sure, they are brutal warriors, but they are no match for us."

US Scrambles To Help Iraq Fight Off Militants As Baghdad Is Threatened

By Mark Landler And Eric Schmitt

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — The White House, confronted by an unexpected crisis on a battlefield it thought it had left behind, scrambled Thursday to reassure Iraq that it would help its beleaguered army fend off militants who have overrun much of the country and now threaten Baghdad.

Recognizing what one official described as an "urgent emergency situation," President Obama and his aides moved on multiple fronts. A senior official said the president was actively considering American airstrikes against the militant groups. Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. telephoned Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki to express American support. And Pentagon officials briefed lawmakers about what one senator later described as a "grave situation."

In his only public comments on Iraq, Mr. Obama said his national security staff was meeting around the clock. But the frenzy of activity has yet to produce a tangible American response — attesting to how swiftly this crisis has erupted and how it has left a stunned White House groping for a response.

The chaotic situation in Iraq showed no sign of letup on Thursday as emboldened Sunni militants who seized two important Iraqi cities this week moved closed to Baghdad while Kurdish forces poured into the strategic northern city of Kirkuk after it was evacuated by government forces.

Airstrikes were only one of several options being weighed by the president, according to the senior official, who

cautioned that the president had made no decision on military action. The airstrikes, the official said, could be delivered either by unmanned drones or warplanes.

"I don't rule out anything," Mr. Obama said, speaking in the Oval Office after meeting with Prime Minister Tony Abbott of Australia, "because we do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria, for that matter." He said he was watching the fast-moving events with "a lot of concern."

For Mr. Obama, ordering airstrikes would be a symbolically momentous step, returning the United States to a combat role in Iraq two and a half years after he pulled out the last American soldier, ending the nation's involvement in a war that left more than 4,400 Americans dead.

The possibility of coming to Iraq's rescue raises a host of thorny questions for Mr. Obama, who has steadfastly resisted being drawn into sectarian strife in Iraq or its neighbor, Syria. Republican lawmakers accused him of being caught flat-footed by the crisis and of hastening this outcome by not leaving an adequate American force behind after 2011.

Reports that Iran has sent its paramilitary Quds Force to help the struggling Iraqi Army battle the militant group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, raised the awkward possibility that the United States could find itself allied with Iran in shoring up an unpopular Shiite government in Baghdad. The White House said it was aware of the reports, but did not confirm them.

Mr. Obama insisted he had been monitoring the threat from Sunni militant groups for several months. The United States, he said, had supplied Iraq with military equipment and intelligence.

Until now, though, the White House has rebuffed several requests from Mr. Maliki for the United States to conduct airstrikes against the staging areas of the militant groups, north and west of Baghdad, where extremists have flowed across the border from Syria.

In the past two days, Mr. Obama acknowledged, it was clear that the United States needed to go further. "Iraq's going to need more help," he said. "It's going to need more help from us, and it's going to need more help from the international community."

"In our consultations with the Iraqis," he said, "there will be some short-term, immediate things that need to be done militarily. But this should be also a wake-up call for the Iraqi government."

The president said the crisis confirmed his decision — articulated in a speech at the United States Military Academy — to reorient American counterterrorism strategy from fighting Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan to a more diffuse set of terrorist groups, some linked with Al Qaeda, that stretch from the Middle East to North Africa.

On Capitol Hill, however, the images of Baghdad under threat from Islamic militants fanned a political firestorm.

Speaker John A. Boehner warned that the progress in Iraq was "clearly in jeopardy," and said Mr. Obama had been caught "taking a nap."

Democrats said the strife was the result of former President George W. Bush's misguided invasion of Iraq in 2003. "One act of violence provokes another act of violence," said the Representative Nancy Pelosi, the House minority leader. "And here we are."

Senators on the Armed Services Committee emerging from a two-hour, classified briefing on Iraq appeared stunned by what they heard from a senior Pentagon official, two senior Defense Intelligence Agency analysts and the three-star general in charge of security cooperation at the American Embassy in Baghdad.

"Needless to say, it's a grave situation," said Senator Bill Nelson, a Florida Democrat.

A State Department spokeswoman said American contractors working on foreign military sales had been moved from their base north of Baghdad by their companies. But diplomats and staff members at the embassy in Baghdad and consulates elsewhere in Iraq had not been moved, according to the spokeswoman, Jen Psaki.

Republicans and some Democrats sharply criticized the Obama administration for not having a credible response to help the Iraqi government.

"There is no strategy," said Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, in an interview. "The president said he would not rule out anything. Is that a strategy? Is that a way to counter ISIS?" he said, using the acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

Senator Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, demanded that the administration provide Congress with both short-term and longer-term options. "We need a proposal and recommendation from the administration, and so far it has not been provided," he said.

Mr. Blumenthal also castigated Mr. Maliki for failing to include Sunnis as full partners in his government, a failure other critics have said has pushed Sunnis into the hands of Islamic militant groups like ISIS.

Most lawmakers expressed caution in committing to American airstrikes against militant targets, as Mr. Maliki has requested. But some said it might be the only way to give the Iraqi security services time to reorganize and blunt the militants' offensive.

"It might be the only way we can give some support so they can regroup, so the Iraqi Army can get itself together," said Senator Joe Manchin III, a West Virginia Democrat.

While experts said leaving behind a residual force of several thousand American troops would have helped the Iraqi Army tactically, some doubt it would have prevented the sectarian forces that are threatening to tear the country into Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish blocs.

"In the long run, I'm not sure it would have made a difference with the forces pushing for the disintegration of Iraq," said Gen. Amos Yadlin, a retired head of Israeli military intelligence who is now the executive director of Israel's Institute of National Security Studies.

Andrew J. Tabler, an expert on Syria at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said that American airstrikes would "help them deal with the symptoms of the disease, but the disease is rooted in Syria."

Michael R. Gordon contributed reporting.

Obama Says "All Options On Table" To Aid Iraq, But Others Say That's Not Really True

By Nancy A. Youssef And Anita Kumar

[McClatchy](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — Despite some expressions of concern in Congress and a pledge from President Barack Obama that "all options are on the table" for ways to help Iraq's government beat back a determined advance by Islamist fighters, there were few signs Thursday that Washington was eager to re-engage its military in Iraq.

Pentagon officials said there was no change in the scheduled September delivery of six F-16 fighters to the government of Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, no revisions to training plans for Iraqi special forces in Jordan later this month, and no alteration in the summer timetable for leasing Apache attack helicopters to Iraq for training purposes. White House spokesman Jay Carney ruled out sending ground troops as one of the options Obama referred to when he said he didn't "rule out anything" in considering what the U.S. might do for Iraq.

"What we've seen over the last couple of days indicates the degree to which Iraq is going to need more help," Obama told reporters before he met in the Oval Office with Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. "It's going to need more help from us, and it's going to need more help from the international community."

U.S. military officers voiced frustration at unfolding events in Iraq, not surprising since most of those now serving had been deployed there during the eight-year U.S. occupation that ended less than three years ago. Yet Pentagon officials and independent observers said there were few options for the U.S. military in Iraq today, both practically and politically. Many instead proposed encouraging Maliki, a Shiite Muslim, to bridge the deep political divide that has helped drive Sunni discontent with his government — something that events in Iraq suggested was too little, too late.

Some variation of "What is it you would propose we do?" was the response from Pentagon officials to questions about whether the United States was considering helping Iraqi security forces fend off the Islamic State of Iraq and

Syria, which since Monday has taken control much of northern Iraq, including Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, Saddam Hussein's hometown, Tikrit, and began marching toward Baghdad.

With Obama ruling out ground forces, but suggesting the United States needed to help, many floated a U.S. air campaign to bolster the Iraqi forces. Such a strike, perhaps with armed drones, could hit ISIS military targets outside urban centers, though hitting forces concentrated in cities such as Mosul would be far too risky, endangering civilians. But observers said that such a campaign, even in the outskirts, would have to be followed by Iraqi ground forces to take back the cities — an unlikely prospect given that as many as four Iraqi divisions had abandoned their posts and slipped back into the civilian population.

On Capitol Hill, frustration with the Maliki government and its management of the security forces crossed party lines.

"It's unclear how airstrikes on our part can succeed unless the Iraqi army is willing to fight, and that's uncertain given the fact that several Iraqi army divisions have melted away," Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said in a statement. "While all options should be considered, the problem in Iraq has not been so much a lack of direct U.S. military involvement, but a lack of reconciliation on the part of Iraqi leaders."

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said the United States should exact a promise of inclusivity from Maliki before agreeing to help.

"In Iraq, hopefully this is a wakeup call for Prime Minister Maliki, who has practiced exclusive politics, contrary to U.S. counsel. He needs to engage immediately in a multi-pronged approach to address the ISIL threat, which includes a commitment to political inclusion, targeted security operations against ISIL targets, and a pledge to protect all Iraqi citizens," Kaine said in a statement, using an alternative acronym for the Islamic State. "The United States should work with allies and regional partners to provide appropriate support once there is a commitment from Maliki to this set of principles."

Others proposed that the United States provide more weapons, air systems and ammunition to fend off the ISIS threat. But the Iraqis already have lost control of an undetermined amount of U.S.-supplied weapons to ISIS forces who were quick to post purported photos of fighters driving off with U.S.-supplied Humvees, now bearing the Islamic State flag. Moreover, such systems require time to train those using them. Events appear to be moving too quickly for that.

"You can't solve this problem with just material support," said Jessica Lewis, research director for the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War. Moreover, "ISIS is moving fast. This is going to look different next week."

Still others suggested that the United States share more intelligence with its Iraqi counterparts. But as Lewis noted: "The shortcoming is not information. ISIS is out in the open. The shortcoming is a campaign design."

In addition to the apparent military limitations are concerns about how much the United States should help a prime minister whose divisiveness helped create the situation that allowed large swaths of Sunni-dominated areas to fall into ISIS hands. There were reports Thursday that Qassem Suleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards special forces, was in Baghdad to help the Maliki government mount a counterattack and protect the capital. Suleimani's presence, if confirmed, would likely stoke sectarian fears among Sunnis.

Obama himself made reference to the political problems that contributed to ISIS' rise. And in the White House summary of a phone call between Maliki and Vice President Joe Biden, who has been the U.S. point man on Iraq, the administration stressed political dialogue, saying: "The vice president underscored that it will be critically important for all of Iraq's communities to reach a lasting political accommodation and to be united in order to defeat their common enemy."

"This should be also a wakeup call for the Iraqi government," Obama said. "There has to be a political component to this so that Sunni and Shia who care about building a functioning state that can bring about security and prosperity to all people inside of Iraq. . . . And that is going to require concessions on the part of both Shia and Sunni that we haven't seen so far."

Others felt that advice overlooked Maliki's own contribution to the problem. "We cannot help as long as Maliki is leading," Lewis said.

The lack of U.S. military options did not stop Republicans on Capitol Hill from attacking the president for allowing parts of Iraq to fall into jihadist hands, though there were no proposed solutions to stop it.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, suggested the administration was taking a nap, while Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona said the president's national security team should resign.

"It's a colossal failure of American security policy," McCain said.

U.S. Weighing Direct Military Assistance To Iraq

By Carol E. Lee, Jay Solomon And Adam Entous
[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Obama Hints At Military Action In Iraq. Are Airstrikes The Only Option?

By Howard LaFranchi

[Christian Science Monitor](#), June 12, 2014

Washington — The stunning advance of Sunni militants who threaten to plunge Iraq into a Syria-style civil war is ringing Washington's alarm bells over the region and posing the strongest challenge yet to President Obama's assertion that under his presidency the US has responsibly ended its Middle East wars.

The White House has said little since Mosul, a major northern Iraqi city, was seized Tuesday by forces of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). On Thursday Mr. Obama suggested the deterioration in Iraq in recent days would prompt military assistance to the Iraqi government, though he did not spell out what form the aid would take.

"I do not rule out anything, because we do have a stake in making sure these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria," Mr. Obama said after an Oval Office meeting with Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. "What we've seen over the past couple of days indicates the degree to which Iraq is going to need more help."

That assistance will include "short-term immediate things that need to be done militarily," Obama said, without going into detail.

After ISIS, an Al Qaeda-inspired group that already controls swaths of northeastern Syria, overran Tikrit and continued to within 100 miles of Baghdad Wednesday, a national security spokeswoman said in a statement that the US pledges full support to the embattled government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

The statement was issued after a hastily called White House meeting of national security and military officials Wednesday to take up the growing threat from the advancing and increasingly entrenched Syria-Iraq Islamist extremists.

But with Republican critics blasting Obama for a rush-from-war strategy they say threatens not just Iraq but also Afghanistan and Libya, while leaving the Syrian crisis to deepen and destabilize the region, the president may, very soon, have to get more specific than not ruling out any course of action.

On Thursday Sen. John McCain (R) of Arizona, a prominent hawk and interventionist, said in a furious Senate floor speech that the collapse across northern Iraq of US-trained Iraqi security forces was only further evidence of the "failure" of Obama's Middle East strategy. The president, Senator McCain said, needs a new strategy, a new national security team, and even a new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Mr. Maliki, the Iraqi leader, is reportedly seeking US airstrikes targeting the advancing militants, as well as an acceleration of the delivery of US arms, including awaited F-

16 fighter jets. US officials say Obama is considering sending unspecified additional aid to Baghdad, with White House spokesman Jay Carney saying in a statement that the US would "continue to provide, and as required increase, assistance to the government of Iraq" to reverse the militants' gains.

Whether or not any increase in assistance would include airstrikes – either from bombers in the region or from drones – may depend on whether or not Baghdad appears threatened in the coming days. Some US military officials say they believe the Iraqi capital will present a much different picture from Mosul or Tikrit, since it is much better fortified and is home to many elite military units.

"If you want to help Maliki, the only option left is airpower," says retired Gen. Amos Yadlin, executive director of the Institute of National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv. "But frankly I don't see the president, after disengaging from Iraq, doing that."

Only two weeks ago, Obama gave what the White House billed as a "major foreign policy speech" at West Point in New York in which he again extolled how his administration has ended the wars it inherited responsibly. He also laid out a cautious approach to military intervention.

Critics like McCain are laying the blame for the easy advance of jihadist forces in Iraq at Obama's feet for having pulled out all US troops in 2011, after failing to reach an accord with Maliki on a residual US military presence. Others warn that Obama is about to repeat the Iraq "error" in Afghanistan, with a plan to leave 9,800 troops in Afghanistan next year but to be fully out by the end of 2016.

"Today, thanks to Obama, Al Qaeda is resurgent in Iraq – taking back cities from which it had been driven by the blood of American soldiers [and] using Iraq as a base from which to carry out jihad in neighboring Syria," says Marc Thiessen, a former senior aide to President George W. Bush and a research fellow in American presidential leadership at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

A similar scenario of US troops leaving a relatively stable country only to see extremist forces resurgent a few years later could also play out in a few years in Afghanistan, Mr. Thiessen says.

But others caution against attributing Iraq's current crisis to the departure of US troops, with some saying that the Shiite Maliki's sectarian politics and failure to build trust with Sunni tribes is a much more significant factor.

If anyone is looking to pin Iraq's crisis on an American action, says the INSS's Mr. Yadlin, it makes more sense to blame it on the Bush administration decision after the 2003 invasion to disband Iraq's military, security, and intelligence apparatus. "That is the root of the problem today," he says.

Yadlin says the region is undergoing the inevitable crumbling of artificial borders that were drawn across the region by European powers a century ago.

A redrawing of Mideast borders may be unavoidable, but the urgent task for Obama – a president who had lofty plans for shifting American geopolitical priorities away from the Middle East – will be to see to it that no territory is ceded to a jihadist state.

Obama: US Will Send Fresh Help To Beleaguered Iraq

By Julie Pace And Lara Jakes
[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) – Less than three years after pulling American forces out of Iraq, President Barack Obama is weighing a range of short-term military options, including airstrikes, to quell an al-Qaida inspired insurgency that has captured two Iraqi cities and threatened to press toward Baghdad.

"We do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold," Obama said Thursday in the Oval Office.

However, officials firmly ruled out putting American troops back on the ground in Iraq, which has faced resurgent violence since the U.S. military withdrew in late 2011. A sharp burst of violence this week led to the evacuation Thursday of Americans from a major air base in northern Iraq where the U.S. had been training security forces.

Obama, in his first comments on the deteriorating situation, said it was clear Iraq needed additional assistance from the U.S. and international community given the lightning gains by the militant group Islamic State of Iraq and Levant. Republican lawmakers pinned some of the blame for the escalating violence on Obama's reluctance to re-engage in a conflict he long opposed.

For more than a year, the Iraqi government has been pleading with the U.S. for additional help to combat the insurgency, which has been fueled by the civil war in neighboring Syria. Northern Iraq has become a way station for insurgents who routinely travel between the two countries and are spreading the Syrian war's violence.

Iraqi leaders made a fresh request earlier this week, asking for a mix of drones and manned aircraft that could be used for both surveillance and active missions. Officials said Obama was considering those requests and was expected to decide on a course of action within a few days.

The U.S. already is flying unmanned aircraft over Iraq for intelligence purposes, an official said.

Short of airstrikes, the president could step up the flow of military assistance to the beleaguered Iraqi government, increase training exercises for the country's security forces and help boost Iraq's intelligence capabilities. The U.S. has been leery of its lethal aid falling into the hands of militants or being otherwise misused.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the U.S. is sending about \$12 million in humanitarian aid to help nearly a million Iraqis who have been forced from their homes by recent fighting.

Obama huddled with his national security team Thursday to discuss the deteriorating security situation. And Vice President Joe Biden called Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to underscore that while the U.S. stands ready to help, it would be crucial for Iraq to come up with longer-term solutions to its internal political strife.

Nearly all American troops left Iraq in December 2011 after Washington and Baghdad failed to negotiate a security agreement that would have kept a limited number of U.S. forces in the country for a few more years at least.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a frequent White House critic, called on Thursday for Obama's entire national security team to resign. House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, accused the president of "taking a nap" while conditions worsened.

But Congress appeared divided over how to respond, with some Republicans backing airstrikes and other lawmakers from both parties suggesting that was the wrong approach.

There were no calls for putting American troops back on the ground in Iraq, and Obama's advisers said the president had no desire to plunge the U.S. back into a conflict there.

"The president is mindful that the United States has sacrificed a lot in Iraq and we need to not just be taking this all back on ourselves," said Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser. "We need to come up with solutions that can enable the Iraqis to manage their internal security and their internal politics."

Even after American troops left Iraq, the U.S. has continued to send weapons and ammunition – although not nearly as much as Baghdad has requested. A U.S. training mission for Iraqi counterterror forces dwindled to almost nothing earlier this year, and Baghdad asked as early as last summer for armed U.S. drones to track and strike terrorist hideouts.

The administration resisted, and similarly rejected options for airstrikes in neighboring Syria.

Instead, the U.S. Embassy has sold small scout helicopters, tanks, guns, rockets and at least 300 Hellfire missiles to Iraqi forces. A U.S. shipment of ScanEagle surveillance drones is to be delivered to Iraq later this summer, and the State Department is trying to speed an order of Apache helicopters to Baghdad. Additionally, Congress is reviewing a \$1 billion order of arms, including Humvee vehicles, to Iraq.

Several thousand Americans also remain in Iraq, mostly contractors who work at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on programs to train Iraqi forces on American military equipment

like fighter jets and tanks. One of the largest training missions was based at the air base in the city of Balad, about an hour northwest of Baghdad, where three planeloads of Americans were being evacuated on Thursday. They included 12 U.S. government officials and military personnel who have been training Iraqi forces to use fighter jets and surveillance drones.

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Caught Off Guard By Al Qaeda Uprising, Obama Considers More Aid To Iraq

By Dave Boyer

[Washington Times](#), June 12, 2014

Caught off guard by al Qaeda-linked militants seizing more cities in Iraq, President Obama said Thursday he's not ruling out anything to help the besieged government in Baghdad, including possible air strikes.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office at the White House, Mr. Obama said the U.S. has interest in assuring that jihadists don't gain control in Iraq.

"I don't rule out anything," he said. "We do have a stake in making sure these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria."

Al Qaeda-aligned Sunni militants were advancing south and threatening to move on Baghdad on Thursday after overrunning the cities of Mosul and Tikrit — with Iraqi government forces retreating. Republican lawmakers say the advances by the militant Islamic State of Iraq and Syria are a result of Mr. Obama's order to withdraw U.S. troops in 2011.

Speaker John A. Boehner accused Mr. Obama of "taking a nap" while the Islamist extremists gain territory that was hard-won by U.S. forces over the past decade. A White House spokesman fired back that Mr. Boehner wasn't offering any helpful "policy prescriptions."

Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican, said the situation in Iraq shows that Mr. Obama's national security team is a "failure" and that he needs to replace Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"I believe that history will judge this president's leadership with the scorn and disdain that it deserves," Mr. McCain said on the Senate floor.

Sen. Tim Kaine, Virginia Democrat, said the situation in Iraq is "very dire" and urged the Obama administration to present a plan to Congress "very, very soon."

As the military situation on the ground in Iraq spun out of control, senators on the Armed Services Committee received a military briefing and emerged stunned.

"This is a desperate situation," said Sen. Roy Blunt, Missouri Republican. "It's moving quickly. It appears to me

that the chickens are coming home to roost for the president's policy of not leaving anybody there to be a stabilizing force."

The developments in Iraq are a stark contrast to Mr. Obama's frequent pronouncements that al Qaeda is "on the run" and that its leadership has been decimated. In a speech at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point three weeks ago, the president backed a policy of restraint abroad and called for an end to U.S. "military adventures."

With militants now overrunning vast portions of Iraq, Mr. Obama said Thursday the crisis "underscores" his approach outlined in the West Point speech — that the U.S. should rely more on partners to fight extremism in the Middle East and in Africa.

"We're not going to be able to be everywhere all the time," Mr. Obama said. "But what we can do is to make sure that we are consistently helping to finance, train, advise military forces with partner countries, including Iraq, that have the capacity to maintain their own security."

He said his proposed \$5 billion "counterterrorism partnership fund" would allow the U.S. "to extend our reach without sending U.S. troops to play Whack-a-Mole wherever there ends up being a problem in a particular country."

"That's going to be more effective," Mr. Obama said.

Lawmakers of both parties are raising calls for the administration to provide air strikes against the militants, including the possible use of drones.

"Certainly, we need to help stabilize the country," said Rep. Jackie Speier, California Democrat, on MSNBC. "The extent to which we can help with airstrikes and drones with no boots on the ground, I think is a good decision. Restoring stability there is in our country's best interests."

Mr. Obama said the events of the past few days show "the degree to which Iraq's going to need more help."

"My team's been working around the clock" to determine how best to aid the Iraqi government, Mr. Obama said.

The president's options in Iraq do not include troops, said White House press secretary Jay Carney. "We are not contemplating ground troops, I want to be clear about that," Mr. Carney said.

Rep. Frank Wolf, Virginia Republican and author of the legislation that created the Iraq Study Group, said the developments in Iraq are "deeply troubling."

"The rapid fall of multiple Iraqi cities to the terrorist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) brings the militant group notably closer to its declared aim of establishing a caliphate that spans the northern sections of Syria and Iraq," Mr. Wolf said. "This jihadi extremist group, with origins in al Qaeda, is effectively carving out a terrorist state in the heart of the Middle East before our eyes, and the Obama administration appears to have no plan to respond."

The U.S. has provided military assistance to Baghdad including 300 Hellfire missiles, millions of rounds of small-

arms ammunition, machine guns, grenades and rifles. The U.S. is also preparing to send military helicopters and F-16 fighter jets.

For Obama, Iraq Looms Large Again

By Scott Wilson

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

President Obama inherited two wars on taking office, one he called "dumb" to his political benefit and the other he described more urgently as "the war we need to win."

It is the dumb one today that poses the most immediate challenge to his national security priorities and to his foreign policy legacy.

Iraq is splintering, and with it both the original neo-conservative belief that a sectarian dictatorship could be made quickly into a stable democracy and Obama's hands-off approach to the wider region.

The Islamist insurgents now seizing cities across Iraq's battered north grew up in Syria, whose civil war Obama has steadfastly avoided despite the grave risks it poses to the region's delicate stability.

Those threats of a wider regional war have been given shape. In recent days, armed Islamists spanning the Syrian border have seized Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, and a string of Sunni Muslim towns, long estranged from the Shiite-led central government, that run south to the edge of Baghdad. Turkey and Iran may intervene to protect their political and security interests, and Iraq's Kurds have moved into the long-contested city of Kirkuk, which was abandoned by the Iraqi army.

Now a president elected to end the United States' wars faces demands, in Washington and in Baghdad, to rejoin the one he long condemned and had thought was over. The expected line of his presidential legacy — Obama as the commander in chief who brought to a close the nation's post-Sept. 11, 2001, conflicts — is threatened now to include an asterisk.

"My team is working around the clock to identify how we can provide the most effective assistance to them," Obama said Thursday in an Oval Office appearance with Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. "I don't rule out anything, because we do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria, for that matter."

How the United States ends its wars, those that have followed the Sept. 11 attacks and defined a decade of U.S. foreign policy, has been a point of debate in recent days.

Within months, the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan is scheduled to end, bringing to an official close the United States' longest war, even if several thousand troops will remain. Obama's controversial decision this month to trade a group of Taliban detainees for captured U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe

Bergdahl was framed as part of an unsatisfying end-of-war process.

But it is how Obama ended the Iraq war 2 1 / 2 years ago — and the decisions he has made since then to avoid new conflicts — that has been revived with the most sustained period of organized violence in Iraq since the U.S. departure.

The Obama administration has stepped up shipments of military hardware to Iraq in recent months, including assault rifles, transport helicopters and other equipment.

How Obama will decide now on Iraqi requests for more direct assistance, including U.S. airstrikes, may have an effect not only on the insurgents' advance but also on the prospects for Obama's party in the midterm elections in November.

"Should American men and women be fighting in Iraq today and is that the right decision for our national security interests?" Jay Carney, the White House press secretary, told reporters Thursday, a message that resonates with a war-weary public being challenged to welcome home its veterans with understanding and employment.

"We cannot have U.S. forces around the world in armed conflicts without end — it's simply not a wise approach to our national security interests," Carney said.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said Thursday that what is transpiring in Iraq represents a "colossal failure of American security policy."

Obama's management of foreign policy — an area of political strength in his first term — has declined in recent years.

A Washington Post-ABC News poll conducted this month — after Obama's confrontation with Russian President Vladimir Putin over Ukraine and worsening civil strife in Syria — found that 41 percent of Americans support his foreign policy. The figure is five percentage points below his overall job-approval rating.

For the White House, the problem in such numbers is that, judged issue by issue, a majority of Americans consistently approve of the policies Obama has carried out overseas. The low rating in many ways suggests an overall lack of faith that he is effectively projecting U.S. leadership abroad.

What is certainly true is that Obama is in line with public opinion when it comes to war, which renders any decision to engage directly again in Iraq, the most politically fraught U.S. conflict since Vietnam, even more difficult to make in an election year.

A majority of Americans turned against the Iraq war several years ago, responding in surveys then that the war was no longer worth fighting. A Post-ABC News poll in March 2013 found that only 38 percent of respondents thought the war was worth its costs.

For the United States, the Iraq war has been over since the end of 2011 when Obama, fulfilling a campaign pledge, withdrew all U.S. forces after nine years of combat.

He had been unable to secure an agreement with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite leader close to Iran, to grant U.S. troops immunity from prosecution beyond the end of that year. The result made leaving behind any U.S. forces impossible — and it was, in many ways, exactly the result the White House wanted.

Many conservatives, politically invested since the George W. Bush administration in a successful outcome in Iraq, criticized the president for a precipitous departure. But the public welcomed the move. A Post-ABC News poll at the time found that 78 percent of respondents supported the decision to withdraw all U.S. troops.

Administration officials at the time celebrated advances of the U.S.-trained Iraqi security forces, saying that violence had declined sharply nationwide since they had taken the lead. On the battlefield today, those security forces are abandoning posts across the north, from Tikrit to Kirkuk.

In announcing the full troop withdrawal, Obama hedged against future days of car bombings, sectarian attacks and political strife. He warned that "there will be some difficult days ahead for Iraq."

"And the United States will continue to have an interest in an Iraq that is stable, secure and self-reliant," he said.

Obama's commitment to those interests is being tested now.

In a commencement address at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., last month, he defended his record in office, calling the United States stronger than ever before and his critics out-of-step advocates of more war.

At the time, he announced a \$5 billion fund to assist other countries in combating terrorism, an idea he underscored again Thursday in the case of Iraq.

"We're not going to be able to be everywhere all the time, but what we can do is to make sure that we are consistently helping to finance, train, advise military forces with partner countries, including Iraq, that have the capacity to maintain their own security," Obama said. "And that is a long and laborious process, but it's one that we need to get started."

Whether a left-behind contingent of American troops would have prevented the crisis is unclear, and Carney said Thursday that no U.S. ground forces would be deployed to Iraq.

In his remarks, Obama urged Maliki and Iraq's other sectarian leaders to come together against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, overcoming years of political deadlock and conflict to hold off an al-Qaeda affiliate metastasizing in the heart of the Middle East.

"It's fair to say that in our consultations with the Iraqis there will be some short-term, immediate things that need to

be done militarily, and our national security team is looking at all the options,” Obama said. “But this should be also a wake-up call for the Iraqi government.”

Post polling manager Peyton M. Craighill and polling analyst Scott Clement contributed to this report.

Obama Considering Options In Iraq

By Justin Sink

[The Hill](#), June 12, 2014

President Obama on Thursday said he won’t “rule out anything” in responding to the “emergency situation” in Iraq and vowed that rebel militants cannot be allowed to gain permanent footholds in the country.

“This is an area that we’ve been watching with a lot of concern, not just over the last couple of days but over the last several months,” Obama said.

“I don’t rule out anything because we do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria, for that matter,” he continued.

Obama said there would be some “short-term, immediate things that will need to be done militarily” and that his staff was “looking at all the options.”

“But this should be also a wake-up call from the Iraqi government that there has to be a political component to this,” Obama said.

Obama’s vow to not “rule out anything” was in response to a question about the use of drones or manned airpower, and an administration official clarified that the White House was not considering boots on the ground.

“We are not contemplating ground troops, I want to be clear about that,” press secretary Jay Carney said. “The president was answering a question specifically about air strikes.”

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an offshoot of al Qaeda, has captured major cities in Iraq’s north, including Mosul, the nation’s second-largest city, and Tikrit, the home of former leader Saddam Hussein. Rebel forces have also seized the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, and hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled the cities while rebels freed prisoners and seized government buildings.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has appealed to the Obama administration to authorize airstrikes against the Sunni militants, according to multiple reports, but so far the administration has resisted doing so.

Earlier Thursday, National Security Council spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan said that while the administration “always looks at a range of options, the current focus” of discussions with the Iraqis was helping to “build the capacity” of the government there to confront the ISIS. So far, the U.S. has provided \$15 billion in weapons, equipment and training services to the Iraqi government, and White House officials say another tranche should arrive soon.

“That includes, in some cases, military equipment, it includes intelligence assistance, it includes a whole host of issues,” Obama said. “But what we’ve seen over the last couple of days indicates the degree to which Iraq’s going to need more help. It’s going to need more help from us and it’s going to need more help from the international community.”

Republican lawmakers on Thursday pressed the president to authorize airstrikes against the rebel militants.

“There is no scenario where we can stop the bleeding in Iraq without American airpower,” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said after a classified Senate Armed Services Committee briefing. “If American airpower is not interjected into the equation, I don’t see how you stop these people.”

Other Republicans blasted the White House, with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) calling for the resignation of the president’s national security team.

“The first thing is get rid of this national security team, which has been a total failure,” McCain told reporters.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) blamed the rebel gains on the Obama administration agreeing to fully withdraw U.S. troops from the country.

“We’re seeing the unraveling of Iraq,” she said.

Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) accused Obama of “taking a nap” on the worsening conditions.

“It’s not like we haven’t seen this problem coming for over a year and it’s not like we haven’t seen, over the last five or six months, these terrorists moving in, taking control of western Iraq,” Boehner said.

Obama also used the chaos in Iraq to call on Congress to move on a \$5 billion counterterrorism fund he proposed during his foreign policy address at West Point late last month. Obama said the program would “extend our reach without sending U.S. troops to play Whac-A-Mole wherever there ends up being a problem in a particular country.”

“We’re not going to be able to be everywhere all the time,” Obama said. “But what we can do is to make sure that we are consistently helping to finance, train, advise military forces with partner countries, including Iraq, that have the capacity to maintain their own security.”

— This report was last updated at 2:22 p.m.

Obama Could Bomb Iraq Without Congress

By Steven Dennis

[Roll Call](#), June 12, 2014

President Barack Obama has the authority to wage war in Iraq without going to Congress, because the original use of force authorization remains in effect.

Obama said Thursday he’s “not ruling anything out” in Iraq, as rebels have swept through some of that country’s largest cities and are bearing down on Baghdad.

But White House Press Secretary Jay Carney appeared to walk back Obama’s comment at his briefing.

"We are not contemplating ground troops. I want to be clear about that. The president ... was answering a question about airstrikes," Carney said.

When asked about getting Congress's permission to take action, Carney was noncommittal.

"We are in active consultation with members of Congress," he said.

He demurred when asked directly about the 2002 resolution. An administration spokeswoman, Caitlin Hayden, told Yahoo in January that the administration supported repealing the Iraq AUMF.

A recent Congressional Research Service report says the authorization to use military force (AUMF) in Iraq had no expiration date and has not been repealed. Therefore it remains current law, "although its continued effectiveness is questionable.

"Arguably, the president could rely on [it] to reintroduce forces into Iraq if he determined that Iraq once again posed a threat to U.S. national security."

But, the report notes, any such decision would likely meet renewed opposition in Congress.

Another military involvement in Iraq would be certain to face resistance from the president's own party. Several lawmakers urged caution before taking action, including Senate Armed Services Chairman Carl Levin, D-Mich.

"We got into Iraq without adequate consideration for the consequences," he said in a Thursday statement. "What is required now is thoughtful consideration of our options, none of which, typically for the Middle East, is obvious or easy. ... It's unclear how air strikes on our part can succeed unless the Iraqi army is willing to fight, and that's uncertain given the fact that several Iraqi army divisions have melted away. While all options should be considered, the problem in Iraq has not been so much a lack of direct U.S. military involvement, but a lack of reconciliation on the part of Iraqi leaders."

Just last month, Democrats led by Foreign Relations Chairman Robert Menendez of New Jersey introduced legislation to repeal the Iraq authorization.

"The time to repeal the authorization for use of military Force for Iraq is past due," Menendez said then. "Our service members completed their mission with distinction and courage when combat operations ceased in 2010 and the U.S. Congress must fulfill its obligation and repeal the AUMF. I voted against the Iraq War, and now, after nearly 5,000 of our bravest American souls paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country, we have a responsibility to formally end this state of conflict and rescind this open-ended AUMF for Iraq."

Other Democrats signed on, including Sens. Barbara Boxer of California, Benjamin L. Cardin of Maryland and Tim Kaine of Virginia.

"Voting against the resolution authorizing the use of military force in Iraq was one of my proudest moments as a

senator," Boxer said. "It is long past time to close this tragic chapter in American history."

Fear, Sectarianism Behind Iraq Army Collapse

By Hamza Hendawi And Bassem Mroue

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

CAIRO (AP) – The video, set to sweetly lilting religious hymns, is chilling. Islamic militants are shown knocking on the door of a Sunni police major in the dead of night in an Iraqi city. When he answers, they blindfold and cuff him. Then they carve off his head with a knife in his own bedroom.

The 61-minute video was recently posted online by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, an al-Qaida splinter group of Sunni extremists. The intent was to terrorize Sunnis in Iraq's army and police forces and deepen their already low morale.

That fear is one factor behind the stunning collapse of Iraqi security forces when fighters led by the Islamic State overran the cities of Mosul and Tikrit this week, sweeping over a swath of Sunni-majority territory. In most cases, police and soldiers simply ran, sometimes shedding their uniforms, and abandoned arsenals of heavy weapons.

Even after the United States spent billions of dollars training the armed forces during its 2003-2011 military presence in Iraq, the 1 million-member army and police remain riven by sectarian discontents, corruption and a lack of professionalism.

Many Sunnis in the armed forces are unprepared to die fighting on behalf of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite-led government, which many in their minority community accuse of sharp bias against them. The Islamic State has exploited this by touting itself as the Sunnis' champion against Shiites.

Shiites in the armed forces, in turn, feel isolated and deeply vulnerable trying to hold on to Sunni-majority areas.

Desertion has been heavy the past six months among forces in the western province of Anbar, Iraq's Sunni heartland, where troops have been fighting in vain to uproot Islamic State fighters who took over the city of Fallujah, said two high officials – one in the government and the other in the intelligence services.

The militants who early this week swept into the northern city of Mosul included former Sunni army officers who had deserted out of frustration with al-Maliki's government, the two officials told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence reports.

As the militants approached, the two officials said, many of the top army commanders in Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, fled to the autonomous Kurdish region.

With their generals gone, the ranks saw no reason to stay.

"We were fighting, but our leaders betrayed us," one soldier who escaped from Mosul told the AP in Irbil, capital of

the Kurdish region. "When we woke up, all the leaders had left."

The intelligence assessments show that many of the 52,000 police and 12,000 soldiers in Mosul surrendered, handing over their weapons in exchange for safe passage out, the two officials said.

With a salary of \$700 a month for newly enlisted men, the army and the police have attracted many young Iraqis who would otherwise be unemployed. Once in, some bribe commanders so they can stay home and take a second job, lamented the officials.

Most are in it for the paycheck. "There's a sense the individuals looked to themselves and thought this is not my fight," said Feisal Istrabadi, a former Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations. "They haven't been trained and imbued with a sense of professionalism."

"Even in the army, the loyalties are not to the state," said Istrabadi, now director of the Center for the Study of the Middle East at Indiana University.

Many troops are drawn from the ranks of Shiite militiamen and from Sunni tribal militias, known as the Sahwa, set up by the Americans to fight al-Qaida. The loyalties of those troops are often more to their sect or tribe than to the state. In Baghdad, army checkpoints manned by Shiite troops often fly Shiite banners or images of Shiite religious figures.

With most soldiers lacking training and discipline, offensive operations are mostly carried out by a special, U.S.-trained counterterrorism outfit of some 10,000 men that fought alongside the Americans for years, the two officials said.

But that unit, they said, does not have the manpower to hold territory after it drives militants out. So it hands the task over to regular troops, who then surrender it when under fire.

The counterterrorism unit is under al-Maliki's direct authority, and there is discontent among officers in the regular military that the prime minister weighs in too heavily on military matters. Another source of low morale among the ranks is widespread corruption in military contracts that end up with troops receiving poor supplies and food.

The two officials said the security forces' incompetence will very likely force al-Maliki to rely increasingly on hard-line Shiite militias, some of which are loyal to Iran, in the fight against the Islamic State.

That would only further deepen the shadow that sectarianism casts over Iraq and its armed forces.

The Sunni minority that dominated power under dictator Saddam Hussein resents the political ascendancy of the Shiite majority since his 2003 ouster in the U.S.-led invasion. The two communities came close to outright civil war in 2006-2008, with tens of thousands killed in almost daily massacres and bombings.

Sunnis are well represented in the military's officer corps. The majority of soldiers and warrant officers are Shiites, but they mostly serve in areas dominated by members of the same sect. That leaves the Sunnis to serve in Sunni areas like Mosul and Anbar, where many of them are demoralized by the idea of fighting against fellow members of their Muslim sect.

Police forces are usually drawn from local populations and so are particularly vulnerable to intimidation.

The harrowing video put out 10 days ago by Islamic State's media arm, Al-Furqan, underscores the threats to Sunnis in pro-government forces.

Speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, Iraqis contacted in Anbar and the provinces where Mosul and Tikrit are located said the video was widely seen. They spoke of people they knew personally who deserted the military after watching the footage of the summary beheading.

One resident of Fallujah, identifying himself only by his nickname Abu Ali, said the video brought home the Islamic State's brutality. But he said morale is already low among troops because of almost daily attacks by jihadis on army positions. "The strikes by fighters in the streets had more effect than the video," he said.

Besides the scene of the beheading of the Sunni police major in Salaheddin province, the video includes footage of drive-by shootings of off-duty security personnel and the killings of captured army soldiers. In one scene, fighters masquerading as soldiers set up a checkpoint on a main highway, stopped cars and killed Shiites and security personnel by the side of the road.

In another horrifying scene, fighters abduct a Sahwa commander along with his two sons. They are forced to dig their own graves in the desert before their throats are slit.

"I advise whoever is with the Sahwa to repent and quit," the commander says to the camera. "Here I am digging my grave with my own hands. ... They can get to anyone."

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U.S. Secretly Flying Drones Over Iraq

White House Could Expand Drone Flights Following Takeover of Two Iraqi Cities

By Adam Entous And Julian E. Barnes

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Islamist Fighters Set Their Sights On Baghdad

By Ammar Al Shamary And John Dyer, Special For Usa Today

[USA Today](#), June 13, 2014

BAGHDAD — An al-Qaeda splinter group's advances on the Iraqi capital Thursday threatened to trigger a new Sunni-vs.-Shiite civil war three years after the departure of U.S. troops.

As independent Kurdish forces aligned with Iraq's military joined the fight, the U.S. mulled requests to aid the collapsing Iraqi army.

"We have to deal with what is clearly an emergency situation in Iraq," President Obama said Thursday. "I don't rule out anything, because we do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria."

The White House is not considering ground troops but is weighing airstrikes. The U.S. is flying drones over Iraq for surveillance of the militants, a Pentagon official told USA TODAY, asking not to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

The U.S. also evacuated a major air base in northern Iraq where it had been training Iraqi security forces.

In downtown Baghdad, thousands of young men gathered near an Iraqi army recruitment center, eager to volunteer to help fend off Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters who seized the key cities of Mosul and Tikrit in recent days.

An ISIL spokesman, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, declared Thursday: "We have scores to settle. Do not give an inch of liberated land back. Continue your march. The battle is not yet raging, but it will in Baghdad."

ISIL's victories are calling into question whether Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite-dominated government can repel the Sunni fighters if they reach the capital, a Shiite stronghold. Iraqi troops have offered little resistance. About 30,000 troops have deserted since Monday, the Iraqi government estimated.

Al-Maliki asked the Iraqi parliament to declare a state of emergency to expand his powers. But too few lawmakers attended Thursday's legislative session to reach a quorum.

"Iraq is inching toward a civil war because the Iraqi government is not capable of stopping ISIL," said Haleh Esfandiari of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. "That might turn into a fight eventually between the Shiites and the Sunni Muslims — something that everybody was trying to avoid."

'It Makes You Want To Kill Yourself,' Top Official Says Of Briefing On Terror Group In Iraq, Syria

By Douglas Ernst

[Washington Times](#), June 13, 2014

U.S. officials were briefed in May on the rise of Islamic terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, and one senior official's

take couldn't be more blunt: "It makes you want to kill yourself."

The official who spoke to the Wall Street Journal said that was his assessment of the intelligence on the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), which was shared at a closed-door gathering of Gulf states in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, at the time.

In recent days, ISIS has taken large swaths of Iraq back from the nation's army and security forces, including Mosul, the nation's second-largest city, and Tikrit.

On Thursday, the BBC reported that the Iraqi Army also fled Kirkuk, leaving it in the hands of Kurdish forces before an Islamic offensive is set to begin.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and his Arab counterparts agreed during the May meeting that Islamist forces in Syria and Iraq need to be dealt with. The problem: no one agreed on what to do about it, the Journal reported.

"The U.S. can no longer be the sheriff for the whole world," Maryland Rep. "Dutch" Ruppersberger, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, told the Journal. "We can't be everywhere, and we can't always use military boots on the ground."

Republican Rep. Mike Rogers of Michigan, chairman of the House intelligence committee, told the Journal that vast amount of land controlled by ISIS, which aims to create an Islamic caliphate, should worry Americans.

"Guess what? These people will come home eventually and they are going to come home with, I believe, intentions to fulfill al Qaeda's dream for another attack on our homeland and, certainly, another attack on our Western and European allies," Mr. Rogers said.

Hundreds Of Iraqis Flee Islamic Militant Advance

By Diaa Hadid

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

KALAK, Iraq (AP) — Hundreds of Iraqi men, women and children crammed into vehicles fled their homes Thursday, fearing clashes, kidnapping and rape after Islamic militants seized large swathes of northern Iraq.

The families and fleeing soldiers who arrived at a checkpoint at the northern frontier of this largely autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq were among some half-million people who have fled their homes since Monday, according to a U.N. estimate.

Workers were busily extending the Khazer checkpoint in the frontier area known as Kalak, where displaced women hungrily munched on sandwiches distributed by aid workers and soldiers rushed to process people.

The exodus began after fighters of the al-Qaida breakaway group, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, seized the northern city of Mosul in a stunning assault

Monday. Since then, the militants have moved southward toward the capital, Baghdad, in the biggest crisis to face Iraq in years.

"Masked men came to our house and they threatened us: 'We will get to you.' So we fled," said Abed, a laborer who abandoned his home on the edge of Mosul Thursday. "They kidnapped other people. They took away some people for interrogation."

The young man said rumors were quickly spreading that Islamic State fighters – as well as masked bandits taking advantage of the chaos – were seizing young women for rape or forced marriage.

"They are destroying the honor of families," said Abed, who, like many of the displaced, wouldn't give his full name, fearing the Islamic State fighters.

Many of the displaced said they were on the move because they feared retribution by Iraq's military – underscoring the grave sectarian tensions that have allowed the Islamic State fighters, who are Sunni extremists, to conquer so fast and deeply.

Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, is mostly Sunni, and many residents have long complained of discrimination and mistreatment by the Shiite-dominated central government.

"We were worried the struggle would get bigger, that Maliki's army would shell us," said a middle-aged Sunni woman, referring to the country's Shiite prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki.

"Whoever will rule us – let them rule us," said her husband Talal Ahmad, 62. "We just want our children to be safe."

Many waiting to be processed at the Khazer checkpoint, set among golden wheat fields, echoed similar concerns. Most hadn't seen fighting but heard occasional gunshots. They saw other people fleeing and so joined the exodus.

Many said they panicked after hearing Iraqi army soldiers had abandoned their posts, sure it meant that heavy shelling to drive out the insurgents would follow.

"We left after we saw everybody else leaving," said Abir, a 33-year-old teacher who fled with her husband and three children.

The chaos of the fighting, just some 60 miles away, was evident in Kalak.

Kurdish forces, which act as a de-facto military in the largely autonomous region, took possession of at least a dozen Iraqi military vehicles abandoned by soldiers as they fled their posts ahead of the advancing Islamic State fighters.

The Kurdish soldiers could be seen driving the dirty yellow Humvees, with the national flag emblazoned on them, toward the regional capital, Irbil.

One fleeing Iraqi soldier said he was ordered by his officer to abandon his post, even before Islamic State fighters reached the area.

"We didn't even raise our weapons. This isn't even unimaginable – it's madness," said 38-year-old Shaker Karam. "We didn't even see a terrorist."

At the checkpoint, Kurdish workers erected shelters in anticipation of the arrival of more displaced Iraqis.

Four men measured out an area amid a whipping dust and rain storm to protect the long lines of Iraqis from the sweltering heat. Beside them lay a large pile of water bottles to distribute. Just hours before, they set up a row of public toilets and erected a tent for exhausted women to rest in privacy.

Those who reached the Khazer checkpoint were among the lucky ones.

The U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, said thousands of displaced, particularly children, were sheltering in schools, hospitals and mosques outside Mosul, many of them without adequate water, sanitation, or shelter. The Red Cross said it had already distributed food and relief to 8,000 people near Mosul.

Many fled with little more than the clothing on their backs and, arriving without money said they would have to rely on donations.

Abed's extended family, including his elderly mother and young nieces, said they didn't know where they would sleep Thursday night.

Talal Ahmad's family of 12 was sleeping in the back of a pickup truck that was lined with thin mattresses.

Abir, the teacher, said her middle-class family had enough money for a hotel for a month.

"But we hope to be back before then," she said anxiously.

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Islamist Militants Aim To Redraw Map Of The Middle East

By Bill Spindle And Gerald F. Seib

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Choosing Rebels Over Army, Iraqis Head Home

By Tim Arango

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

ERBIL, Iraq — After Islamic extremists swarmed his city this week, Saad Hussein fled here with his wife and six children. But after one night, he was on his way back home to Mosul, hearing that things were quiet there.

"What can we do?" said Mr. Hussein, at a checkpoint on the road from Erbil to Mosul. "You have to depend on your God."

Another man stood nearby, his two small sons tugging at his belt. He had left Mosul and was waiting to enter Erbil, about 50 miles to the east. "We don't know what will happen in the future," said the man, Ahmed Ali, 31. "The government is not there. It's empty."

As many as 500,000 Iraqis fled Mosul this week after the city was besieged by the extremist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, many of them Sunnis who seemed less fearful of the beheadings and summary justice that the group is known for than of their own government and the barrage it might unleash in an effort to take the city back.

That many Sunnis would prefer to take their chances under a militant group so violent it was thrown out of Al Qaeda sharply illustrates how difficult it will be for the Iraqi government to reassert control. Any aggressive effort by Baghdad to retake the city could reinforce the Iraqi Army's reputation as an occupying force, rather than a guarantor of security.

Many of those who fled said they were terrified of possible airstrikes and indiscriminate shelling that they have seen, in news reports, against insurgents in Sunni-dominated Anbar Province, which has been out of government control for more than six months. Some, saying a rumor had been swirling through the local population, even worried that the Americans would be back to bomb their city. And most said the militants in Mosul had not terrorized the population and were keeping a low profile, with a small number of men in black masks staffing checkpoints.

"We are afraid it will be the same situation as in Falluja and Ramadi," said a municipal worker who gave his name only as Abu Mohammed, for fear of losing his job. He was referring to the two cities in Anbar that have borne the brunt of government airstrikes, which have killed hundreds of civilians.

A woman nearby, asked if the militants were harming people, waved her hands in the air and said: "No, no, no. On the contrary, they are welcoming the people."

Comments like these represent a stark repudiation at the grass-roots level of the governing style of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a Shiite, and his policies that over the years have alienated the Sunni population.

"Maliki wants to end the Sunnis," said Ahmed Hussain, a police officer in Mosul who abandoned his post after seeing the army leave. "Can you tell me how many Shiites are arrested on terror charges? Almost all those in prison are Sunnis. He is targeting us. I want to go back to Mosul, but we are afraid we'll see another Falluja."

Each security sweep that rounds up innocent Sunni men in the name of fighting terrorism has deepened

resentment in the Sunni population toward the government, especially the Shiite-dominated army.

"They are not the Iraqi Army; they are the militia of Maliki," said Abu Mohammed, 49. He also complained about corruption, which is endemic in the army and the police.

"If anyone gets into prison, he has to pay to get out," he said. And there were smaller indignities, he said, such as when soldiers would demand money for allowing people to park on city streets.

As the militants advanced on the city this week, Iraqi Army soldiers quickly laid down their guns and fled, and many citizens were happy to see them go. "The Iraqi Army was tough on the people, not on ISIS," said Abu Mohammed, referring to the extremist group.

The events over the last several days in Mosul — which is majority Sunni, although it has a sizable population of Kurds and some Shiites, too — highlight what critics have said for years: that Sunnis see the army not as a national force but as the protector of the Shiite population. A Western diplomat, in a recent interview, said that in places such as Mosul and Anbar Province, the security forces are regarded as "a foreign force in their own country."

But residents of Mosul say that so far the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has handled the local population with a light touch. Some residents, hardened by their hatred of the army, spoke of the insurgents almost as if they were a liberating army. The militants, residents said, greet people at checkpoints and ask citizens if they are carrying a weapon, and if the answer is no, they let them on their way.

Many spoke of being able to move around the city more freely for the first time in years, after the militants unblocked roads that the army had shut down for security reasons and took down the blast walls that had become a permanent feature of nearly every major Iraqi city over the last decade.

"So far, the militants have not harmed any civilians, and they have freed the city from the checkpoints that choke us," said Ammar Saleh, 32, who works in a hospital in Mosul. Still, he added: "I can't trust that the gunmen are better than the army. I will leave my family here until things are quiet."

And the militants' cordiality toward the local population may not last long. A leaflet, said to be produced by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and distributed Thursday in Mosul, detailed a long list of coming rules, including the forbidding of alcohol and cigarettes, and requiring women to "stay home and not go out unless necessary." The leaflet also said that anyone who worked for the government would be killed unless they sought "repentance."

Whether out of fear of army retaliation or of what life might become under militant control, the crisis has displaced nearly a half-million people, about a quarter of Mosul's population, according to the International Organization for Migration, to villages in the surrounding countryside, Baghdad, or here in the autonomous Kurdish region.

A mayor who was in charge of a small tent camp for the poorest of Mosul residents said that about 100,000 people had entered Erbil from Mosul in recent days. While many were allowed in, many others were not, especially if they were single men or had no family in the Kurdish region.

When Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq and terrorized the Kurdish population, this was a place to flee from. Prosperous and secure, it is now considered a place to flee to, and the caring for refugees, by now, resembles a permanent institution. Trucks bearing the face of Masoud Barzani, the leader of this region, carried in watermelons and mattresses, and volunteers handed out water and bread and cheese.

Thousands fled here during the sectarian war in 2006 and 2007, and over the last year, tens of thousands of Syrians have sought refuge, as have displaced people from Anbar. It is also where former top Sunni officials have come to escape arrest warrants issued by the Maliki government and where, during Mr. Hussein's rule, C.I.A. operatives plotted with dissidents to topple the government.

With security, the region has also advanced economically, and on the stretch of road that refugees traveled from Mosul, a lone billboard greeted them with an advertisement for Park View, a luxury apartment complex in Erbil with concierge services and a health club.

One of the Mosul residents who escaped to Erbil was Atheel Nujaifi, the governor of Nineveh Province, where Mosul is. In an interview on Thursday, he said that one of the reasons Mosul was quiet on Thursday — and the citizens felt comfortable returning — was the presence of other groups, like tribal militias and a group led by former Baathist officers, in addition to the Islamists.

"The situation quieted down, and ISIS is not the only force in control in Mosul," said Mr. Nujaifi, who considers himself too much of a target to return just yet. "And we tried to keep everything as it is — the electricity, water, everything. That's why the people feel comfortable going back."

Mr. Nujaifi said it would be nearly impossible for government forces to retake Mosul anytime soon, especially with militant advances in other cities blocking the way for troop reinforcements from Baghdad. He also advised against the army's return, he said.

What Mr. Nujaifi is trying to do, he said, is unite the many local fighting groups into one force to try to push out the extremists, many of whom are foreign fighters.

"This will happen soon," he predicted.

Collapse Of Iraqi Army A Failure For Nation's Premier And For U.S. Military

By Kevin Sullivan And Greg Jaffe

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

The Iraqi army's collapse this week marked a stark failure for the U.S. military that trained it and for Prime

Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government, which has struggled to address leadership and morale problems that now threaten the force's ability to defend the country.

Although they far outnumbered the insurgents and had greater firepower, Maliki's troops have fled by the thousands in the country's north, allowing the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to take the city of Mosul and start an ominous march toward Baghdad.

Former U.S. military officials who oversaw the building of the Iraqi military placed much of the blame for that dereliction on Maliki, who has purged the Iraqi army of some of its most capable leaders.

The army's dilemma came down to a single question that soldiers had to ask themselves as they faced sudden attack, said Derek Harvey, a former top U.S. military official in Iraq: "Do I want to die for Maliki?"

Instead of focusing on training and equipping the military, Maliki has "used all of his tools to target his political rivals," said Emma Sky, a top adviser to U.S. generals in Iraq during the latter years of the U.S. occupation. "Maliki sought to consolidate power and protect his regime. His opponents fear and distrust him."

In particular, Maliki, a Shiite Muslim, has alienated Sunni tribal leaders in northern and western Iraq who helped shift the course of the war in 2007 when they turned on forces aligned with al-Qaeda in Iraq and backed the U.S. military.

Some former U.S. military officials also pointed to the failure of the United States and Iraq to secure an agreement that would have permitted American troops to remain in Iraq after 2011 — a pact that would have allowed for more training.

But the larger problem, many say, is Maliki, whose centralization of decision-making has made it hard for the Iraqi military to react quickly to changes on the battlefield.

In many instances, generals must wait for phone calls from the prime minister's office before they can move troops, said retired Lt. Gen. James M. Dubik, who led the U.S. military's training effort from 2007 to 2009. Dubik said the Iraqis haven't even been able to select officers to send for training in the United States paid for by the Pentagon.

"The prime minister's office can't decide who to send," Dubik said. "So the courses go unfilled."

The sudden collapse of Iraqi forces also highlights gaps in the army that U.S. military officials knew existed when American forces withdrew at the end of 2011. U.S. commanders had hoped to keep as many as 10,000 troops in the country to help Iraqi forces with planning large-scale operations of the kind needed to launch a counteroffensive on a major city such as Mosul or Fallujah.

U.S. officials also realized that they needed to continue to work with the Iraqis to build logistics systems to ensure that armored vehicles and helicopters are ready for war.

The Obama administration, nevertheless, decided to withdraw U.S. forces following the Iraqi government's refusal to grant American troops immunity from prosecution beyond 2011.

Rick Brennan, a former top military adviser in Iraq, said the Iraqi military still lacks basic capabilities in areas such as communications, logistics and maintenance. He said it also lacks any significant air power, although Iraq is buying U.S. F-16 fighter jets and Apache attack helicopters.

"Over time, what's occurred is that the Iraqi army has no ability to defend itself with close air support once it starts to get overrun," Brennan said. "At the small-unit level, once they start getting hit, they are abandoning post, both Sunni and Shia, on a scale we never anticipated.

"What's a surprise is how rapidly it's been occurring and the degree to which you see total collapse of large elements of Iraqi forces, leaving behind probably hundreds of millions of dollars of equipment" in the hands of ISIS, Brennan said.

"It's hugely frustrating," said Michael D. Barbero, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant general who oversaw the training of Iraqi troops from 2009 to 2011. "It's a fault of both Washington and Baghdad. We knew they had chinks in their armor, and we knew they weren't going to get better once we left. And yet we didn't try hard enough to get an agreement to keep some people there."

Barbero said that despite years of training and billions of dollars in U.S. time and equipment, Iraq's military is still a "checkpoint Army," more interested in manning roadblocks than developing intelligence and engaging in counterinsurgency missions.

He said U.S. trainers had stressed that intelligence-gathering was the key to disrupting insurgent networks active in Iraq. U.S. officials set up high-tech command and control centers, but Iraqi military leaders largely coordinate their operations by cellphone, he said.

"Our Army continuously trains; that wasn't in their DNA," Barbero said. "We set up all these training bases. We built ranges and encouraged them to do live fire. And it just didn't take, for whatever reason. I'm not saying we're stainless in this. Obviously we could have done some things better."

Barbero said he was in Iraq a month ago, and Iraqi military officials assured him that the ISIS threat was contained. "I know no Iraqis saw this coming," he said.

The Americans also never anticipated that the Iraqis would face an enemy force as well-trained as ISIS. Throughout the U.S. occupation, the insurgents, fearful of U.S. air power, rarely attacked with a force larger than 100 to 200 men. Most attacks were launched by small teams of five to 15 fighters.

What's not yet clear is whether the damage to Iraq's army is limited to the units in the northern third of the country or whether it will extend to forces in Baghdad, causing the entire force to fracture.

The units in Mosul had been fighting a low-grade insurgency for months. Those units also included a high percentage of Sunnis, who are less loyal to the Shiite-led government. It's possible that the units in Baghdad will be more willing to fight.

"This could be as catastrophic as it looks, or it could be less," said Douglas Ollivant, a retired U.S. Army colonel who still does business in Iraq. "There's no question it is bad. But we won't know for sure until we see how units from the south perform."

Other former military officials were less sanguine. "Once a fighting force in one area folds, it can become an epidemic very quickly," Dubik said.

The one positive aspect for the United States is that Maliki may now be willing to cooperate with former Sunni leaders in exchange for U.S. help.

"He knows he's facing an existential threat," Dubik said. "He has to realize that both his political life and his physical life are at risk."

In recent months, as ISIS started taking more and more territory, Iraqi military officials have made increasingly more urgent requests for U.S. military help, including drone strikes.

"You'd sit down with a general, and they literally thought we could make this go away with a push of a button. They had no grasp on reality," said a U.S. defense official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe discussions with the Iraqis.

Harvey, a former top intelligence adviser to David H. Petraeus, who served as commander of the allied forces in Iraq, said the military's problems are a symptom of a much deeper crisis in Iraqi society created largely by Maliki's mishandling of delicate sectarian tensions.

"The core of all this is political," Harvey said. "What we're facing today is not al-Qaeda, and Prime Minister Maliki wants us to focus on ISIS as the primary threat. The vanguard is ISIS. The breadth and depth of this is basic Sunni Arabs who are fed up."

Karen DeYoung contributed to this report.

Sunni Militants Vow To March On Iraqi Capital

By Sameer N. Yacoub And Adam Schreck

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

BAGHDAD (AP) – Islamic militants who seized cities and towns vowed Thursday to march on Baghdad to settle old scores, joined by Saddam Hussein-era loyalists and other disaffected Sunnis capitalizing on the government's political paralysis over the biggest threat to Iraq's stability since the U.S. withdrawal.

Trumpeting their victory, the militants also declared they would impose Shariah law in Mosul and other areas they have captured.

In northern Iraq, Kurdish security forces moved to fill the power vacuum – taking over an air base and other posts

abandoned by the military in the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk. The move further raised concern the country could end up partitioned into Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish zones.

Three planeloads of Americans were being evacuated from a major Iraqi air base in Sunni territory north of Baghdad, U.S. officials said, and Germany urged its citizens to immediately leave parts of Iraq, including Baghdad.

President Barack Obama said Iraq will need more help from the United States, but he did not specify what it would be willing to provide. Senior U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter by name said Washington is considering whether to conduct drone missions in Iraq.

The U.N. Security Council met on the crisis, underscoring the growing international alarm over the stunning advances by fighters from the militant group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had asked parliament to declare a state of emergency that would give him and his Shiite-led government increased powers to run the country, but the lawmakers failed to assemble a quorum.

The Islamic State, whose Sunni fighters have captured large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria, aims to create an Islamic emirate spanning both sides of the border. It has pushed deep into parts of Iraq's Sunni heartland once controlled by U.S. forces because police and military forces melted away after relatively brief clashes, including in Iraq's second-largest city of Mosul.

Skirmishes continued in several areas. Two communities near Tikrit – the key oil refining center of Beiji and the city of Samarra, home to a prominent Shiite shrine – remained in government hands, according to Iraqi intelligence officials. The price of oil jumped to above \$106 a barrel as the insurgency raised the risk of disruptions to supplies.

In its statement, the Islamic State declared it would start implementing its strict version of Shariah law in Mosul and other regions it had overrun. It said women should stay in their homes for modesty reasons, warned it would cut off the hands of thieves, and told residents to attend daily prayers. It said Sunnis in the military and police should abandon their posts and “repent” or else “face only death.”

The Islamic State's spokesman vowed to take the fight into Baghdad. In a sign of the group's confidence, he even boasted that its fighters will take the southern Shiite cities of Karbala and Najaf, which hold two of the holiest shrines for Shiite Muslims.

“We will march toward Baghdad because we have an account to settle there,” he said in an audio recording posted on militant websites commonly used by the group. The statement could not be independently verified.

Baghdad does not appear to be in imminent danger of a similar assault, although Sunni insurgents have stepped up car bombings and suicide attacks in the capital recently.

While ISIL fighters gained the most attention in this week's swift advances, it was increasingly clear that other Sunnis were joining the uprising.

Several militant groups posted photos on social media purporting to show Iraqi military hardware captured by their own fighters, suggesting a broader-based rebellion like that in neighboring Syria.

In Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, overrun by militants Wednesday, witnesses said fighters raised posters of the late dictator and Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, his former deputy who escaped the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and eluded security forces ever since.

Fighters loyal to his Naqshabandi Army as well as former members of Saddam's Baath Party were the main militant force in Tikrit on Thursday, said a resident who identified himself by his nickname, Abu Mohammed, out of concern for his safety. He said about 300 soldiers surrendered near the governor's office – a spectacle captured in multiple amateur videos posted online.

Lawmaker Hakim al-Zamili as well as two senior intelligence officials, who were not authorized to talk to the press, confirmed the involvement of al-Douri's group and other former Baathists and Saddam-era military commanders. That could escalate the militants' campaign to establish an al-Qaida-like enclave into a wider Sunni uprising and lead to breaking up the country along ethnic and sectarian lines.

Feisal Istrabadi, a former Iraqi ambassador to the U.N., said the rapid fall of Mosul and Tikrit required trust from the local population – something ISIL or al-Douri wouldn't necessarily have on their own.

“Ordinary citizens feel disenfranchised and have no stake in the state anymore,” he said. “This is an alliance of convenience where multiple disaffected groups have come to defeat ... a common foe.”

With its large Shiite population, Baghdad would be a far harder target for the militants. So far, they have stuck to the Sunni heartland and former Sunni insurgent strongholds where people are already alienated by al-Maliki's government over allegations of discrimination and mistreatment. The militants also would likely meet far stronger resistance, not only from government forces but by Shiite militias.

Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and the Asaib Ahl al-Haq Shiite militia vowed to defend Shiite holy sites, raising the specter of street clashes and sectarian killings.

Baghdad authorities tightened security and residents stocked up on essentials.

“Everybody I know is worried for the safety of his family as the militants are advancing to Baghdad,” said Hazim Hussein, a Shiite shopowner and father of three.

Another Baghdad merchant, Mohammed Abdul-Rahim, a Sunni, lamented that the “future of this country looks more dim than any time in modern Iraqi history.”

Hundreds of young men crowded in front of the main army recruiting center in Baghdad on Thursday after authorities urged Iraqis to help battle the insurgents.

Security officials said the Islamic State fighters managed to take control of two weapons depots holding 400,000 items, including AK-47 rifles, rockets and rocket-propelled grenades, artillery shells and mortars. A quarter of the stockpiles were sent to Syria, they said.

The advances by the Sunni militants are a heavy defeat for al-Maliki. His Shiite-dominated political bloc came first in April parliamentary elections – the first since the U.S. military withdrawal in 2011 – but failed to gain a majority, forcing him to try to build a governing coalition.

“We do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria, for that matter,” Obama said in Washington.

Al-Maliki and other Iraqi leaders have pleaded with the Obama administration for more than a year for additional help to combat the growing insurgency.

Britain and France said it was up to Iraqi authorities to deal with terrorism and worsening security, while Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the rapid advances by the militants proved the invasion of Iraq 11 years ago had been a fiasco.

“What is happening in Iraq is an illustration of the total failure of the adventure undertaken primarily by the U.S. and Britain and which they have let slip completely out of control,” Lavrov was quoted by Russian state news agencies as saying.

In Shiite powerhouse Iran, President Hassan Rouhani blasted the Islamic State as “barbaric.” Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif offered support in a phone call with his Iraqi counterpart, Iranian TV reported. Iran has halted flights to Baghdad because of security concerns and has intensified security on its borders.

The U.N. Security Council urged a national dialogue including all political and religious groups in Iraq but took no action after discussing the crisis and hearing a closed briefing from the top U.N. envoy in Iraq, Nickolay Mladenov.

Diplomatic efforts were underway to free 80 Turkish citizens held by militants in Mosul, an official in the Turkish prime minister’s office said. The captives include 49 people seized in the Turkish consulate Wednesday, said an official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Kurdish fighters from the ethnic group’s autonomous enclave in the north showed signs of taking a greater role in fighting back against the ISIL. Their role is a potential point of friction because both Sunni and Shiite Arabs are wary of Kurdish claims on territory.

Kurdish security forces known as peshmerga took over an air base and other posts abandoned by Iraqi forces in Kirkuk, Brig. Halogard Hikmat, a senior peshmerga official

told The Associated Press. He denied reports the whole city was under peshmerga control.

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Iraq Militants Finding Support In Seized Towns Raise Attack Risk

By Donna Abu-Nasr

[Bloomberg News](#), June 13, 2014

When Islamic militants swept into the western Iraq city of Mosul this week, Ammar al-Tayee was relieved to see soldiers flee for their lives.

The 30-year-old medic used to spend hours at army checkpoints and got fed up with the Shiite-dominated military insulting residents of the mostly Sunni city, he said.

“Life is stable now,” al-Tayee said by telephone two days after the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, an al-Qaeda splinter group, took over his city. “The gunmen haven’t hurt anyone and I feel safe away from the grip of the government.”

Such grievances among Iraq’s majority Sunni population against the Shiite-led government have offered the militants, known as ISIL, the opportunity to secure a base inside Iraq as well as the territory they control in Syria. The group’s fighters took over Mosul and other Iraqi towns this week, as violence escalated 11 years after the U.S.-led invasion to depose Saddam Hussein.

The step toward a mini-state will heighten the risk of terrorism in the region and elsewhere, said Evan Kohlmann, senior partner at Flashpoint Partners in New York.

“Every acre of territory that ISIL seizes control of, particularly in its homeland, now gives it added leverage and power to recruit and train individuals to carry out attacks not just inside of Iraq but in foreign countries,” Kohlmann said.

ISIL has lured fighters from the region with a call for holy war. The group has been active in Syria, especially since April 2013 when it was split from the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front, part of a Sunni-dominated insurgency that has been trying to oust President Bashar al-Assad for three years.

In Syria, it has influence from the town of al-Bab in the northern Aleppo Province to al-Busayrah 260 kilometers (162 miles) away in the east, according to Rami Abdurrahman, head of the U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which has been documenting the violence through local activists.

ISIL has forced Islamic law on the population under its control, amputating the hands of robbers, crucifying or cutting the heads of those they determine as criminals and banning the display of underwear or mannequins in shop windows, which are deemed un-Islamic, said Abdurrahman.

In Syria, ISIL's base has been undermined after the group alienated other Islamists. Iranian-backed Shiite groups from Lebanon and Iraq have sent fighters to help Assad, limiting ISIL's ability to make more progress on the ground.

An enclave in Iraq would give ISIL a more secure base, according to Kohlmann, who said there's "very compelling" evidence that individuals are being trained by radical groups for attacks in Western countries. He said the May 24 attack at the Brussels Jewish Museum in which a former fighter in Syria is the prime suspect, was "just the tip of the iceberg."

The success of the militants reflects the treatment of the Sunni minority in Iraq, said Bartle Bull, a partner at Northern Gulf Partners, an investment firm in Iraq.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite Muslim, came to power in 2006 at the height of the sectarian conflict after the U.S. invasion. He marginalized some Sunni politicians and tribes that had fought off Muslim extremists in western Iraq in a campaign that started in 2007.

"The current government has been terribly divisive, especially with the Sunnis," Bull said in an interview with Bloomberg Television yesterday. "The biggest implications of this are on the government formation process. Will Maliki stay or go is much more important for the long term."

ISIL had already been carving out a base in western Iraq along the border with Syria before this week's developments. It seized the western city of Fallujah in January, and the government hasn't been able to retake it.

"There's a feeling that there's sectarianism instead of citizenship in this country, that the state belongs to its ruler and not its people," Nouredin Qablan, vice chairman of the Nineveh provincial council in Mosul, said by phone.

It's not clear if ISIL will push into other cities. In a recording posted online, a man identified as the group's spokesman, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, vowed to march on Baghdad and take over the southern Shiite cities of Karbala and Najaf, home to the holiest shrines for Shiite Muslims.

To push further and set up a separate entity, the group will need a large force and will have to dominate Iraq's Sunnis, said Kamran Bokhari, vice-president for Middle Eastern and South Asian affairs at Texas-based consulting firm Stratfor. The government, as well as Turkey, Iran and possibly the U.S., would likely respond to prevent that, he added.

"It's too early to reach the conclusion that they will be able to set up an emirate," Bokhari, co-author of *Political Islam in the Age of Democratization* published last year, said from Toronto. "That is their intent. But is it their capability? We just have to see."

In Mosul, medic al-Tayee said ISIL "hasn't done anything so far to scare people or turn them against it."

He worries that this could change or the government would pound his city to force ISIL to surrender. "It's the fear of the unknown that's making us nervous," he said.

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Carney Believes Iraqi People Should Determine Future Of Iraq [VIDEO]

By Ariel Cohen & Katie Frates

[Daily Caller](#), June 12, 2014

Ultimately, it's up to the people.

During Thursday's press conference, Jay Carney appeared caught off guard by the explosion of violence in a country that the United States previously liberated from a dictator.

Time and time again Carney reminded the press that the future of Iraq is really in the hands of the Iraqi people — because what else could he say?

Insurgents from the extremist militant group and terrorist network, ISIL, have begun seizing cities across Iraq's north, including Iraq's second largest city of Mosul. Iran is poised to become involved as well. This conflict has the potential to completely threaten Obama's national security agenda, as well as his foreign policy legacy.

No wonder the administration is floundering.

Carney stated that the United States "can not be everywhere at all times," and that the President does not wish to send troops back into the country — especially after the bloody eight years the United States spent in Iraq from 2003-2011.

In a separate meeting, President Barack Obama stated that the Iraqi people would need more help from both the United States, as well as the international community while dealing with this crisis. Yet, he did not specify what kind of assistance the United States would provide.

"My team is working around the clock to identify how we can provide the most effective assistance to them," Obama said. "I don't rule out anything."

In the press conference, Carney expanded slightly on the possible methods that the United States could implement, saying that air strikes could be a definite possibility.

"We are not contemplating ground troops," Press Secretary Jay Carney said. "We are assessing what we can provide additionally."

But time and time again, Carney repeated the sentiment that "Iraq's future is in the hands of the Iraqi people." For most every question he was unsure of, this became his new go-to line.

The press conference became lively when a reporter asked about the possibility of civil war in Iraq. Carney responded that there's no question President Obama had pledged to end the war in Iraq, and he did so, in 2011. At this

point a reporter interrupted Carney asking, "There's no war in Iraq now?" Carney, obviously flummoxed, responded that there was no U.S. combat mission in Iraq.

So there you have it. Three years after the United States left the war in Iraq, the Iraqi people find themselves steeped in an even deeper conflict than before America left.

Jay Carney has most definitely checked out.

Al-Baghdadi, A Brutal Contender For Bin Laden's Mantle, Emerges In Iraq

By Guy Taylor

[Washington Times](#), June 12, 2014

U.S. officials monitoring the fast-shifting landscape of al Qaeda-inspired militancy in the Middle East in recent years have been on the lookout for a single figure who might emerge to match the jihadist charisma and global mystique once held over Sunni Muslim extremists by Osama bin Laden.

The name on many lips this week is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi — the elusive, cutthroat and unconditionally feared leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which is now wreaking havoc in Iraq.

While al-Baghdadi has had a \$10 million State Department bounty on his head since 2011, he remained largely out of the global spotlight until this week, when his followers swiftly seized control of vast territory in Iraq, including a major section of Mosul, the nation's second-largest city.

Images of bin Laden wearing a signature beard, turban and flowing white robes became known around globe after 9/11, but al-Baghdadi's rise has been as shadowy as it has been bloody.

Few confirmed photographs of the ISIL leader exist. One, a grainy passport-style headshot of a youngish Arab man with closely cropped hair, an intense stare and an Al Capone-like smirk on his lips, sits atop al-Baghdadi's declassified case file at the State Department's Rewards for Justice Program.

The file outlines how his rise in Iraq was tied to the aftermath of bin Laden's death at the hands of U.S. Special Forces in 2011. Directing a wave of suicide bomber attacks in the nation under the banner of a group then known as al Qaeda in Iraq, al-Baghdadi is said to have pledged to "carry out 100 attacks across Iraq in retaliation for bin Laden's death."

U.S. counterterrorism and intelligence officials say his power and reputation have been growing since and that he soon masterminded the rise of al Qaeda-style extremism among rebels fighting President Bashar Assad in Syria, which shares a long border with Iraq to the northwest.

"Suicide bombers and car bombs during the first half of 2013 caused about 1,000 Iraqi deaths, the highest monthly

violent death tolls since 2008," states a declassified summary of al-Baghdadi's rise posted on the website of the National Counterterrorism Center.

In April 2013, al-Baghdadi "declared the group was operating in Syria and changed its public name to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant," the counterterrorism center's summary states, adding that al Baghdadi then became the subject of infighting involving al Qaeda-inspired groups among Syria's embattled opposition.

"Since ISIL began operating in Syria, it has indiscriminately killed Syrian civilians and other members of the Syrian opposition in addition to targeting the Assad regime and its allies," said one U.S. intelligence official, who asked not to be identified. "This indiscriminate violence has created backlashes against the group."

Too violent for al Qaeda?

Al-Baghdadi, who is believed to be in his early 40s, also has a reputation for trying to buck al Qaeda's original leadership core.

In the post-bin Laden era, that has meant challenging Ayman al-Zawahri, bin Laden's No. 2, who is believed to be still exerting influence from hideouts in Pakistan.

A fight between al-Zawahri and al-Baghdadi erupted in 2013 with al-Zawahri declaring the dissolution of ISIL in Syria and calling on al-Baghdadi to confine the group's operations to Iraq.

Some leading terrorism analysts in the West saw the move as a recognition by al Qaeda leaders that al-Baghdadi's extreme violence was alienating local populations, but other sources have privately suggested that the development may fit neatly into the terrorist movement's deeper evolution.

A former senior U.S. intelligence official told The Washington Times in February that the "life arc" of al Qaeda as a movement is likely to last 50 to 60 years and that the movement is probably only about halfway through its evolution.

It follows that the group will go in unpredictable directions during the years to come — and permit the rise of a regional player such as al-Baghdadi to global stature, thereby overshadowing al Qaeda's veteran leadership.

But other sources, speaking anonymously with The Times, have said there is also debate in counterterrorism circles over the extent to which al-Baghdadi simply has a penchant for biting off more than he can chew as an extremist leader.

Mafia-style tactics

Under al-Baghdadi's leadership, ISIL's strategy has involved fleecing the local population, running "protection rackets" and extorting money from wealthy businesspeople in northern Iraq.

While the mafia-style tactics may bring in piles of local cash that could make ISIL less beholden to al Qaeda's original core, it also comes at a price.

By seizing control of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul this week, ISIL is running the risk of undercutting its own fundraising source. "Mosul is where they get most of their money," one source told The Washington Times, adding that if ISIL fighters attempt to hold the city, the local economy will inevitably crash.

There is also debate over the extent to which al-Baghdadi and ISIL pose a threat beyond Iraq and Syria — and particularly to the United States.

The group's stated goal, which draws from an original mission outlined by al Qaeda in Iraq, is to establish an Islamist Sunni caliphate straddling the Syria-Iraq border.

The National Counterterrorism Center summary of al-Baghdadi's rise noted that AQI initially "expanded its targeting outside of Iraq in August 2005 by attempting a rocket attack on a U.S. Navy ship in the port of Aqaba, Jordan, and in November 2005 with the bombing of three hotels in Amman that left 67 dead and more than 150 injured."

There is no mention of the targeting of U.S. interests over the next seven years. But in 2012, the group "made vague threats against Americans everywhere," according to the summary, which adds that the "arrests in May 2011 of two AQI-affiliated Iraqi refugees in Kentucky highlight the potential threat inside the United States from people associated with AQI."

One U.S. counterterrorism official said ISIL is believed to have roughly 2,500 fighters inside Iraq.

Dozens of those fighters were reported to be struggling against anti-ISIL militants to gain control of the city of Samarra, roughly 70 miles north of Baghdad. Samarra is the city where al-Baghdadi, a Sunni Muslim, was born and raised.

The city is better known, however, as the home of al-Askari Mosque, a sacred shrine for the region's Shiite Muslims that was bombed in 2006, triggering a bloody sectarian war that subsequently ripped through Iraq.

Iraq Disintegration Dismays U.S. Vets

By Jeff Schogol

[Military Times](#), June 13, 2014

Veterans of the Iraq War and their families are watching with dismay and alarm as Sunni insurgents overrun swaths of Iraq, including cities like Mosul, where hundreds of U.S. troops died.

"I completely disagreed with the decision to walk away from Iraq," said former Army sergeant Kenneth Mancanares. "I really wish that I could sign up on something tomorrow and join a volunteer group that's going there to stand up for these people."

He spent more than two years in Iraq, in Ramadi and Baghdad.

"It's not about my personal feelings, about, 'Did I waste my time?' or 'Did my buddies die in vain?' I have met those people over there, and I became friends with them," he said.

Steven Jerome, a former Army sergeant who served in Tikrit, is especially disappointed because he remembers the euphoria Iraqis showed during the 2005 referendum on Iraq's constitution.

"Today, it seems like they lost that drive and just gave up rather than fighting for it," Jerome said. "Maybe that was our fault by essentially handing it to them, rather than them having to take it."

Amy Staff Sgt. Richard Baca II, who served in Baghdad and Al Nashariya, said he feels the current situation in Iraq is happening because U.S. troops were not allowed to destroy the enemy.

"We would get reports of large amounts of insurgent activity or IED activity ... and we would want to act upon that and try to root them out — and we would be told that wasn't our mission, our mission was something else," said Baca, now with the New Mexico National Guard.

Colleen Bowman's husband, Army Staff Sgt. Rob Bowman, served in Mosul in 2004 and 2005. He died of cancer after returning home. She said none of the troops wants to hear talk that their service was for nothing.

"They had many, many accomplishments while they were there," she said. "They left it a lot better than they found it. What happened after that was not up to them. They did their part."

GOP On Iraq: We Told You So

By Jeremy Herb And Burgess Everett

[Politico](#), June 12, 2014

Sen. John McCain said Thursday that President Barack Obama's entire national security team should resign over the resurgence of Islamic militants in Iraq.

"Everybody in his national security team, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ought to be replaced," the Arizona Republican told reporters ahead of a classified Senate Armed Services Committee briefing on the deteriorating situation in Iraq. "It's a colossal failure of American security policy."

The Sunni militant group, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, vowed Thursday to march into Baghdad after overrunning Iraq's government forces in Tikrit and Mosul.

The offensive is sparking a wave of Republican criticism over Obama's decision to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2011 — and concerns that the U.S. gains in the Iraq war were about to completely evaporate.

Less than three years after the end of the U.S. war in Iraq, the Obama administration and members of Congress are now mulling whether the U.S. has to re-engage militarily in order to save the gains made during the eight-year war that saw more than 4,000 U.S. troops killed.

"There is no scenario where we can stop the bleeding in Iraq without American air power," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.). "It is my worst fear come true. If the

president is willing to adjust his policies, I'm willing to help him."

Inside the secure briefing room in the Capitol's basement, lawmakers were reported to be shocked by administration briefers who said that up to four entire divisions of the Iraqi military folded in an instant — allowing insurgent troops to pour into the city of Mosul and other cities near the border with Turkey.

"It's a desperate situation. It's moving quickly. It appears to me that the chickens are coming home to roost for our policy of not leaving anybody there to be a stabilizing force," said Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), a member of GOP leadership.

He said senators were informed of the instant "collapse of four of the 17 divisions without any apparent effort to push back."

"Some Iraqi troops have gone to work with their uniforms on with civilian clothes under their uniforms," Blunt said. "That's a bad sign."

Both the president lawmakers of both parties have uniformly refused to rule out air strikes in Iraq, as has been reportedly requested by the prime minister.

"We will be weighing all options. I'm not ruling anything in or out at this point," said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.).

"It might be the only way that we can go in to give some support so they can hold off until they can regroup, the Shiites can regroup and the Iraqi Army can get itself together," said Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.).

But Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-Mich.) urged his colleagues away from inflammatory statements — after McCain urged Obama to dump his entire national security team.

"We shouldn't knee jerk anything. The Iraqi government a few years back, when they had a chance to sign an agreement that would keep some of our presence there, refused to do it. So we've got to be very careful and thoughtful before we do anything," Levin said.

At the White House, Obama told reporters the White House has been working "around the clock" on options for how to respond and, at this point, "I don't rule out anything."

"What we've seen over the last couple of days indicates Iraq's going to need more help" from the United States and from the international community, Obama said in the Oval Office. "We do have a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria for that matter," Obama added.

For McCain and other GOP defense hawks, the latest developments were a condemnation of the decision to withdraw all U.S. troops from Iraq at the end of 2011.

"We've got another Benghazi in the making here," Graham said after leaving the classified briefing. "What I heard in there scared the hell out of me."

After attending the briefing, both McCain and Graham took to the Senate floor to blast Obama over the latest developments in Iraq. McCain said those who were right in Iraq — like retired Gen. David Petraeus, the former CIA director who as a general carried out the "surge" — should be directing U.S. policy there.

"Lindsey Graham and John McCain were right," McCain said. "Our failure to leave forces on Iraq is why Sen. Graham and I predicted this would happen."

The U.S. should consider providing air power in Iraq, as the Iraqi government has reportedly requested, McCain said, but ruled out putting U.S. troops on the ground there.

"No, I don't think we should send troops back there," he said. "We should explore all the options in air power, get a team over there to advise them. It's so serious I'm not sure exactly how it can be done. Al Qaeda is now the richest terrorist organization in history."

But McCain said that he believed "airstrikes alone will not be enough."

On Wednesday, the White House urged Congress to work to provide funding for "flexibility and resources to help Iraq respond to emerging needs as the terrorist threat from [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] continues to evolve."

"The situation in Iraq is grave, and we're actively working with Iraqi leaders in support of their efforts to implement an effective and coordinated response to address this crisis. We'll continue to provide all appropriate assistance to the government of Iraq," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said.

With Iraq falling into chaos, Republicans said Iraq's depleted security forces bode poorly for the president's path forward in Afghanistan, where he said that all U.S. troops would leave by 2016.

That would still keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan after security operations are handed off to the Afghans at the end of this year, but the GOP lawmakers argued it still provided the Taliban an end date for U.S. forces.

"The president's announcement exactly when we're going to withdraw from Afghanistan — instead of making it based on conditions on the ground — to tell the Taliban, is a mistake," said Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.). "I would hope that the president would take some of the lessons that we're seeing happening in Iraq and not repeat them in Afghanistan."

The Senate Armed Services Committee was briefed Thursday by Elissa Slotkin of the Defense Department, Paul Wolfe, a Defense Intelligence Agency expert on Iraq, DIA terrorism analyst Patrick Pryor of the Defense Intelligence Agency and Lt. Gen. John Bednarek, chief of the Office of Security Cooperation for Iraq.

Tim Kaine: Where Is W.H.'s Iraq Plan?

By Jonathan Topaz

[Politico](#), June 12, 2014

Sen. Tim Kaine said Thursday that the situation in Iraq is “very dire” and urged the Obama administration to present a plan to Congress “very, very soon.”

“The way we ought to do this here in Washington is that the president should put a plan on the table and make a suggestion to Congress about what we should do,” the Virginia Democrat said on MSNBC, adding that Congress and the White House underwent such a process last summer with Syria.

“That’s how the process is supposed to work,” Kaine said, just moments before President Barack Obama spoke Thursday saying he wouldn’t rule out any potential responses to the situation in Iraq. “The administration has not provided any plan or a suggestion, although they are deeply and constantly engaged now within the United States and with allies to determine what that should be. They need to come forward with a proposal and bring it to Congress and then let us debate about what we should do.”

Kaine, a member of both the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees, participated in a closed briefing Thursday on the situation in Iraq. Speaking after the briefing, he said he agreed with Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) that the situation is deteriorating. “It’s a very dire circumstance,” he said.

“I would strongly recommend that the administration come to Congress very, very soon and put some options on the table about what we should be able to do,” the senator added.

Kaine is among the first Democrats to join a growing chorus of Republicans that have criticized Obama for lack of a clear strategy on Iraq. Al Qaeda-aligned extremists have made significant advances this week and Iraqi government forces are heavily retreating.

At his weekly press conference Thursday, House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) angrily denounced what he perceived as Obama’s inaction on Iraq: “What’s the president doing? Taking a nap,” he said.

Senate Armed Services Committee Republicans John McCain of Arizona and Graham also slammed the administration. “Everybody in his national security team, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ought to be replaced,” McCain said, referring to Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey. Appearing on 104.1 KQTH in Tuscon later on Thursday, McCain said Iraq was “a total failure of Obama’s policies” and called the situation “the gravest threat to our national security that I have seen” since the end of the Cold War.

Maliki’s Iraq Disaster

By David Ignatius

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

The stunning gains this week by Iraq’s Sunni insurgents carry a crucial political message: Nouri al-Maliki, the Shiite prime minister of Iraq, is a polarizing sectarian politician who has lost the confidence of his army and nation. He cannot put a splintered Iraq together again, no matter how many weapons the Obama administration sends him.

Maliki’s failure has been increasingly obvious since the elections of 2010, when the Iraqi people in their wisdom elected a broader, less-sectarian coalition. But the Obama administration, bizarrely working in tandem with Iran, brokered a deal that allowed Maliki to continue and has worked with him as an ally against al-Qaeda. Maliki’s coalition triumphed in April’s elections, but the balloting was boycotted by Sunnis.

Given Maliki’s sectarian and authoritarian style, a growing number of Iraq experts are questioning why the Obama administration continues to provide him billions in military aid — and is said to be weighing his plea for lethal Predator drones. The skeptics include some who were once among Maliki’s champions.

“I believe that Maliki has never had the energy or intent” to unify Iraq, says Derek Harvey, a professor at the University of South Florida who advises Centcom and is one of the leading U.S. experts on Iraq. “He was a bad choice in the beginning and our embrace of him was an error.”

A retired U.S. four-star commander asks in an interview: “How in the world can you keep betting on this number [Maliki] given what’s happened?” He believes Maliki is incapable of retaking the territory he has lost, and he wonders when Iran’s Quds Force will intervene to rescue Maliki’s collapsing army.

Maliki’s U.S.-trained army has suffered a series of crushing defeats, as Sunni insurgents from an offshoot of al-Qaeda captured the northern Sunni cities of Mosul and Tikrit and swept toward Baghdad. Already the Sunni extremists control most of western Iraq.

The Shiite-led Iraqi military has crumpled in battle, fleeing the battlefield and leaving behind tanks, Humvees and other vehicles. In cities such as Fallujah, cleared by American troops at great cost, al-Qaeda and its progeny are now dominant.

Maliki’s sectarian political style has helped create this disaster. He has gutted the army of the commanders he suspected of plotting against him. One U.S. expert likens him to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, who purged the Red Army on the eve of World War II.

“He has replaced his generals with Shiite commanders who represent not competency, but political loyalty” to Maliki and his Dawa Party, says Harvey.

The victors belong to an extremist Sunni faction known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. These pitiless, battle-hardened fighters, remnants of what was known as al-Qaeda in Iraq, have attracted jihadists from around the world. One of

their most effective commanders in Mosul is said to have been a Georgian-born Chechen known as Omar al-Shishani. The Chechen was also a key ISIS commander in recent battles around the Syrian city of Aleppo — an illustration of the group's potent cross-border reach.

ISIS forces have swept south along Highway 1 from Mosul, swelling their ranks by liberating 2,000 to 3,000 jihadist fighters from a prison in Nineveh province. The jihadists have captured so much U.S.-made equipment that it's reportedly hard to distinguish friend from foe along the chaotic highway south.

Maliki's forces are said to be drawing their battle lines just above a huge arms depot at Taji, about 20 miles north of Baghdad, which was a key U.S. logistics base during the American occupation, from 2003 to 2010. By consolidating his forces so far south, Maliki is, in effect, conceding the northern cities. Harvey argues that only the pesh merga fighters of Iraqi Kurdistan are strong enough to retake Mosul, but some experts doubt they would launch such a battle unless it was a prelude to a fully independent Kurdistan.

Senior Obama administration officials said Thursday they recognize that Maliki is seen by Iraqi Sunnis as a sectarian figure, and they are pressing him to expand his base in "unity government." But they said there is no "conditionality" in the U.S. offer of military assistance and that the overriding goal short term is to help Maliki stop the Sunni extremists and prevent the fall of Baghdad.

As the fabric of the Middle East rips apart along sectarian lines, the United States and its allies face a fundamental strategic choice: Can they convene a regional peace conference — which would seek to reconcile Sunni and Shiite forces and their key backers, Saudi Arabia and Iran — in some new security architecture?

Restitching the fabric of Iraq and Syria may be Mission Impossible. But with its focus on counterterrorism and weapons supplies, the Obama administration seems to have decided to treat the region simply as a shooting gallery.

Who Lost Iraq? The Iraqis Did, With An Assist From George W. Bush

By Fareed Zakaria

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

It is becoming increasingly likely that Iraq has reached a turning point. The forces hostile to the government have grown stronger, better equipped and more organized. And having now secured arms, ammunition and hundreds of millions of dollars in cash from their takeover of Mosul — Iraq's second-largest city — they will build on these strengths. Inevitably, in Washington, the question has surfaced: Who lost Iraq?

Whenever the United States has asked this question — as it did with China in the 1950s or Vietnam in the 1970s —

the most important point to remember is: The local rulers did. The Chinese nationalists and the South Vietnamese government were corrupt, inefficient and weak, unable to be inclusive and unwilling to fight with the dedication of their opponents. The same story is true of Iraq, only much more so. The first answer to the question is: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki lost Iraq.

The prime minister and his ruling party have behaved like thugs, excluding the Sunnis from power, using the army, police forces and militias to terrorize their opponents. The insurgency the Maliki government faces today was utterly predictable because, in fact, it happened before. From 2003 onward, Iraq faced a Sunni insurgency that was finally tamped down by Gen. David Petraeus, who said explicitly at the time that the core element of his strategy was political, bringing Sunni tribes and militias into the fold. The surge's success, he often noted, bought time for a real power-sharing deal in Iraq that would bring the Sunnis into the structure of the government.

A senior official closely involved with Iraq in the Bush administration told me, "Not only did Maliki not try to do broad power-sharing, he reneged on all the deals that had been made, stopped paying the Sunni tribes and militias, and started persecuting key Sunni officials." Among those targeted were the vice president of Iraq and its finance minister.

But how did Maliki come to be prime minister of Iraq? He was the product of a series of momentous decisions made by the Bush administration. Having invaded Iraq with a small force — what the expert Tom Ricks called "the worst war plan in American history" — the administration needed to find local allies. It quickly decided to destroy Iraq's Sunni ruling establishment and empower the hard-line Shiite religious parties that had opposed Saddam Hussein. This meant that a structure of Sunni power that had been in the area for centuries collapsed. These moves — to disband the army, dismantle the bureaucracy and purge Sunnis in general — might have been more consequential than the invasion itself.

The turmoil in the Middle East is often called a sectarian war. But really it is better described as "the Sunni revolt." Across the region, from Iraq to Syria, one sees armed Sunni gangs that have decided to take on the non-Sunni forces that, in their view, oppress them. The Bush administration often justified its actions by pointing out that the Shiites are the majority in Iraq and so they had to rule. But the truth is that the borders of these lands are porous, and while the Shiites are numerous in Iraq — Maliki's party actually won a plurality, not a majority — they are a tiny minority in the Middle East as a whole. It is outside support — from places as varied as Saudi Arabia and Turkey — that sustains the Sunni revolt.

If the Bush administration deserves a fair share of blame for "losing Iraq," what about the Obama administration

and its decision to withdraw American forces from the country by the end of 2011? I would have preferred to see a small American force in Iraq to try to prevent the country's collapse. But let's remember why this force is not there. Maliki refused to provide the guarantees that every other country in the world that hosts U.S. forces offers. Some commentators have blamed the Obama administration for negotiating badly or halfheartedly and perhaps this is true. But here's what a senior Iraqi politician told me in the days when the U.S. withdrawal was being discussed: "It will not happen. Maliki cannot allow American troops to stay on. Iran has made very clear to Maliki that its No. 1 demand is that there be no American troops remaining in Iraq. And Maliki owes them." He reminded me that Maliki spent 24 years in exile, most of them in Tehran and Damascus, and his party was funded by Iran for most of its existence. And in fact, Maliki's government has followed policies that have been pro-Iranian and pro-Syrian.

Washington is debating whether airstrikes or training forces would be more effective, but its real problem is much larger and is a decade in the making. In Iraq, it is defending the indefensible.

U.S. Must Act To Prevent Extremists' Victory In Iraq

By James M. Dubik

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

James M. Dubik is a retired Army lieutenant general and a senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of War. He commanded the Multi National Security Transition Command-Iraq from 2007 to 2008.

The war in Iraq was not over when the United States withdrew from Iraq in 2011. We just pretended that it was. Like it or not, our departure left a diplomatic and security vacuum that contributed to the crisis unfolding there. The government of Iraq floundered in that vacuum, promulgating the wrong domestic policies and allowing the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to backslide to pre-2007 performance levels. The net result has been that al-Qaeda in Iraq has not only reconstituted but expanded drawing in many of those disenfranchised and disillusioned by Iraq's domestic policies. Worse, it has morphed into the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), whose stated ambition is to create a new Islamic state, absorbing parts of Syria and Iraq. As the past few days have amply demonstrated, ISIS is already more than capable of taking territory and governing.

In much of eastern Syria, ISIS serves as the de facto government. Is it advancing rapidly into northern, central and western Iraq. This week it seized Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city; most of Baiji, home of one of the largest oil facilities in Iraq; and Tikrit. Now it is moving south toward Samarra and Baqubah, en route to Baghdad. It is already entrenched in

Fallujah and Ramadi as well as in most of Iraq's western desert. Its terror campaigns are destabilizing Baghdad and threatening Salahuddin, Tamin and Diyala provinces — the territory between Mosul and Baghdad that it wants to seize next.

While we have been debating whether ISIS fits our definition of a threat, the on-the-ground realities have been passing us by. If ISIS achieves its goal, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iran will have a radical, fundamentalist Islamic state on their borders. Iraq will be split in two, Israel threatened and the security of the United States and the rest of the West put at significantly greater risk. The question isn't whether ISIS is part of al-Qaeda. Rather, the question for the United States and its allies is: Do we keep pretending that the war is over or acknowledge that events in Iraq are rapidly moving in a direction at odds with our security interests? What's our plan?

There is no use debating whether the present state could have been prevented if the United States left a sufficient residual force in place in 2011; neither Baghdad nor Washington could muster the domestic support for that. But the fact is that the Iraqis cannot succeed by themselves. If they could, the situation would not be as dire as it is.

So, what can we do now? Providing Iraq more "military stuff" isn't a real answer, nor is the reintroduction of large numbers of U.S. or coalition troops. We have no easy options, but to start, the United States and its allies must commit to preventing an ISIS victory and assist the government of Iraq in halting and reversing ISIS's progress. Although the long-term solutions for Iraqi stability are diplomatic and political, unless the Iraqi government can stop the ISIS offensive, such actions will be moot.

Halting the offensive is Iraq's nearest-term objective. What is needed is a coordinated air and ground action consisting of both a heavy dose of precisely applied firepower and a sufficiently executed ground defensive. The Iraqis are incapable of such action alone. The firepower will have to be delivered by United States and allied aircraft augmented by Iraqi assets. The Iraqis will also need a small group of advisers to target air support correctly and to help identify or create capable, well-led units that are properly employed and backed by sufficient sustainment capacity. The advisory and support effort must be substantial enough to help the Iraqis conduct an initial defense and then plan and prepare a series of counter-offensive campaigns to regain lost areas. This will be a multi-year effort, but it cannot become a second surge.

These security actions must be taken within the context of an aggressive diplomatic and political effort. The United States and its allies must insist that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki dissolve the nefarious Office of the Commander-in-Chief, which has been one of the primary causes of the erosion of the ISF. The prime minister must also cease being the de facto ministers of defense and interior. Centralizing

security ministries and running security operations from his office have all but ended development of both ministries, politicized the police and the military and reduced the performance of the ISF. Finally, the government of Iraq must change policies so that fewer Iraqis feel excluded. The failure to do so has helped create the crisis of confidence in Iraq's government.

But, again, unless the ISIS offensive campaign is stopped and reversed, none of this will matter.

These would be drastic actions, and they can succeed only if Iraq is convinced that it is facing an existential threat and must change course. The United States and its allies, too, must be convinced that an ISIS state poses a national security threat. No one likes the options before us, but we'll like even less what happens if we do nothing or take only ineffective action.

The Terrorist Army Marching On Baghdad

By Jessica Lewis

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

The Iraq Debacle

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

The End Of Illusions

By Michael Gerson

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

On June 10, President Obama said that the greatest frustration of his presidency was the failure to pass gun control legislation. It was the same day that Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq, fell to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a radical splinter of al-Qaeda. The next day, Tikrit was taken by the militants, who are now preparing for the battle of Baghdad. These gains followed months of ISIS conquests in western Syria, lending reality to the previously absurd pretensions of the group's name.

For an American president, the world is a banquet of frustrations. But the collapse of much of the Middle East into civil war, sectarian conflict, war crimes and terrorist-exploited chaos should rank higher on the list. In Syria, 6.5 million people are internally displaced by a multisided war that has featured civilian bombings, torture, forced hunger and poison gas attacks; more than 2.8 million have fled the country; more than 9 million need humanitarian aid. Perhaps a third of Lebanon's population consists of refugees. And Syria's Sunni insurgency has spilled into Iraq, gaining momentum by exploiting local grievances.

In this light, it is worth rereading Obama's May 28 West Point commencement address. The United States' departure

from Iraq without a status-of-forces agreement was offered as an (attempted) applause line. On Syria, Obama claimed credit for refusing to "put American troops into the middle of this increasingly sectarian war" — resisting a blunder that no one had recommended. He talked of decimating "core al-Qaeda," while non-core al-Qaeda was taking cities in Syria. He vaguely promised to "ramp up" support for the Syrian opposition, which has come to regard such promises as worthless. He proposed a new "Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund" — an executive action in the category of bringing a knife to a regional conflagration.

As of his West Point speech, Obama believed he had gotten his Middle Eastern policy just about right. He employed it as a model of restraint. "The president has tended to see Syria as a beckoning morass, the bottom of the proverbial slippery slope," says Ambassador Frederic Hof of the Atlantic Council. "He has thought that by holding Syria at arm's length he could avoid being drawn into something difficult and complicated."

But risk aversion, it turns out, can multiply complication. Because the United States refused to coordinate an effort to arm the responsible opposition in Syria, there has been no pressure for the regime to engage in serious peace negotiations. Bashar al-Assad has found barrel bombs more effective. In Geneva talks last November, American officials were left with no plan except to (pathetically) hope for Russian and Iranian diplomatic favors, which never came. Countries such as Turkey and the Gulf states, left leaderless in the region, have often funneled support to radicals. The United States has supplied weapons to the Iraqi government to fight militants in western Iraq while (incoherently) refusing to arm people fighting the same enemy 100 miles to the west in Syria. Now a few thousand militants, with roots in the Syrian conflict, threaten to destroy the Iraqi government, along with the remnants of U.S. credibility in the region.

This should be the end of illusions. Sometimes risk aversion can be a very risky option. The mere containment of Syrian chaos would have required a more activist U.S. policy — coordinating Middle Eastern and European powers to create a balance of forces on the ground that might have encouraged a power-sharing agreement among less horrible regime elements and less horrible opposition groups. Some variant is still Syria's best (but fading) hope.

Outside the administration, the unsentimental have sometimes argued that it is not a bad outcome for Assad's forces and the Sunni Islamists to kill each other in a stalemate. Apart from being immoral — content with the slaughter of civilians — this also turns out to be stupid. It is only a stalemate until new battle-hardened extremists are produced who unravel neighboring countries or board planes to destinations unknown.

Hof suspects that, within the administration, "a major course correction is under consideration now, although I

worry whether or not it would result in an effort sizable enough to make a difference on the ground.” After years of defining staying out of the Middle East as success, this may now involve saving the Iraqi government, actively coordinating support to the Syrian opposition and bolstering state institutions in Lebanon and other highly stressed countries.

President Obama has shown no appetite or aptitude for this role — but refusing it now would be a massive failure.

The Sunni-Shiite Conflict Explodes In Iraq

By David Brooks

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, it effectively destroyed the Iraqi government. Slowly learning from that mistake, the U.S. spent the next eight years in a costly round of state-building. As Dexter Filkins, who covered the war for The Times, wrote in a blog post this week for The New Yorker, “By 2011, by any reasonable measure, the Americans had made a lot of headway but were not finished with the job.”

The Iraqi Army was performing more professionally. American diplomats rode herd on Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki to restrain his sectarian impulses. American generals would threaten to physically block Iraq troop movements if Maliki ordered any action that seemed likely to polarize the nation.

We’ll never know if all this effort and progress could have led to a self-sustaining, stable Iraq. Before the country was close to ready, the Obama administration took off the training wheels by not seriously negotiating the NATO status of forces agreement that would have maintained some smaller American presence.

The administration didn’t begin negotiations on the treaty until a few months before American troops would have to start their withdrawal. The administration increased the demands. As Filkins writes, “The negotiations between Obama and Maliki fell apart, in no small measure because of lack of engagement by the White House.”

American troops left in 2011. President Obama said the Iraq war was over. Administration officials foresaw nothing worse than a low-boil insurgency in the region.

Almost immediately things began to deteriorate. There were no advisers left to restrain Maliki’s sectarian tendencies. The American efforts to professionalize the Iraqi Army came undone.

This slide toward civil war was predicted, not only by Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham and writers like Max Boot, but also within the military. The resurgent sectarian violence gave fuel to fears that the entire region might be engaged in one big war, a sprawling Sunni-Shiite conflict that would cross borders and engulf tens of millions.

This slide toward chaos was exacerbated by the civil war in Syria, which worsened at about the same time. Two nations, both sitting astride the Sunni-Shiite fault line, were growing consumed by sectarian violence, while the rest of region looked on, hatreds rising.

The same voices that warned about the hasty Iraq withdrawal urged President Obama to strengthen the moderates in Syria. They were joined in this fight by a contingent in the State Department.

But little was done. The moderate opposition floundered. The death toll surged. The radical terror force ISIS, for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, enjoyed a safe haven from which to operate, organize and recruit.

President Obama adopted a cautious posture, arguing that the biggest harm to the nation comes when the U.S. overreaches. American power retrenched. The American people, on both left and right, decided they could hide from the world.

And now the fears of one really big war seem to be coming true. The ISIS serves as a de facto government in growing areas of Syria and Iraq. Extremist armies are routing the official Iraqi Army, even though they are outmanned by as many as 15 to 1. Iraq is in danger of becoming a non-nation.

Andrew White is a Christian aid worker in Iraq, working on reconciliation. On his blog, he reports that the nation “is now in its worst crisis since the 2003 war.” ISIS, a group that does not even see Al Qaeda as extreme enough, has moved into Mosul, he says, adding, “It has totally taken control, destroyed all government departments. Allowed all prisoners out of prisons. Killed countless numbers of people. There are bodies over the streets.”

Meanwhile, autocrats around the region are preparing to manipulate a wider conflagration. The Pakistani Taliban is lighting up their corner of the world. Yemen and Libya are anarchic. Radical jihadis have the momentum as thousands of potential recruits must recognize.

We now have two administrations in a row that committed their worst foreign policy blunders in Iraq. By withdrawing too quickly from Iraq, by failing to build on the surge, the Obama administration has made some similar mistakes made during the early administration of George W. Bush, except in reverse. The dangers of American underreach have been lavishly and horrifically displayed.

It is not too late to help Syrian moderates. In Iraq, the answer is not to send troops back in. It is to provide Maliki help in exchange for concrete measures to reduce sectarian tensions. The Iraqi government could empower regional governments, acknowledging the nation’s diversity. Maliki could re-professionalize the Army. The Constitution could impose term limits on prime ministers.

But these provisions would require a more forward-leaning American posture around the world, an awareness that sometimes a U.S.-created vacuum can be ruinous. The

president says his doctrine is don't do stupid stuff. Sometimes withdrawal is the stupidest thing of all.

Iraq's Disintegration Could Haunt The United States For Years To Come

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

IRAQ HAS been shattered by a jihadist blitzkrieg, and some in the United States are ready to write off what's left of the country in whose liberation and democratization Americans have invested so heavily. To those who would abandon Iraq, President Obama had a welcome response Thursday: not so fast. As Mr. Obama explained, the United States has "a stake in making sure that these jihadists are not getting a permanent foothold in either Iraq or Syria, for that matter." He and his national security team are considering emergency military aid in addition to the assistance they have quietly supplied in recent months. Crucially, Mr. Obama declined to rule out approving the U.S. airstrikes that Baghdad has been requesting since the forces of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria began spreading into Iraq from Syria months ago but which Washington has so far refused.

A decision to shore up Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government would, at this point, be an on-balance judgment. Mr. Maliki has too often governed as a kind of elected sectarian dictator on behalf of his Shiite compatriots and Iranian patrons rather than the inclusive leader his other patrons, in Washington, have repeatedly urged him to be. ISIS's rapid occupation of a string of Sunni cities north of Baghdad says less about the insurgents' fighting skills than the disdain with which Iraq's troops regard Mr. Maliki. Most of them fled rather than pick up their U.S.-supplied weapons on his behalf. Mr. Obama was justified in describing the ISIS offensive as "a wake-up call for the Iraqi government" — a last chance to mend its ways and to pursue the kind of Sunni-Shiite cooperation that U.S. commanders effectively brokered when they were still in the country.

Still, a frank acknowledgment of the Baghdad government's flaws must be tempered by an equally clear assessment of the enemy it now faces. If an ISIS-dominated "caliphate" were to take root in the swath of Syrian and Iraqi territory the group now controls, it would be a base of operations for terrorist strikes around the world, including the United States. It also would be a harsh dictatorship in which "apostates" — defined as anyone who does not accept ISIS's brand of puritanical Islam — face summary execution. Eager as it was to resume its advance, ISIS still found time to burn the Assyrian church in Mosul. Nor is it in the interest of the United States, or the region, to leave Mr. Maliki totally reliant on Iran, whose covert forces reportedly are already on the ground, ready to assist him against ISIS and, presumably, gain even greater regional power for Tehran.

The temptation to let Iraq fend for itself is strong and, given the history, understandable. Some may even see a chance for stability in reconfiguring the country along its sectarian Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish lines. But there are no neat dividing lines. A breakup of Iraq is likely to bring endless violence to its people and many others around the world. Not to do everything possible to avert that outcome would be a dereliction, and one that Americans might greatly regret for years to come.

Just What Are Obama's Options In Iraq?

[Los Angeles Times](#), June 12, 2014

President Obama said Thursday that the administration was considering "all options," including military action, to help the government of Iraq fend off advancing Sunni Muslim extremists. But we would be surprised — and disappointed — if the administration injected American forces into a conflict from which the U.S. finally extricated itself only three years ago. Ominous as they are, this week's developments justify neither American boots on the ground nor airstrikes carried out by American pilots.

This week's upsurge of violence is partly a spillover of the civil war in Syria — the group that gained control of Mosul and Tikrit is called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria — but it also reflects the failure of Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister Nouri Maliki to establish legitimacy with Sunni Iraqis. It's thus another reminder of the naivete of U.S. strategists who thought that the sectarian hatreds unleashed by the ouster of Saddam Hussein could be easily subdued in a Western-style democracy.

The New York Times reported that even before this week's victories by insurgents, Maliki pleaded with the Obama administration to launch airstrikes against areas used by the rebels to launch attacks. The administration refused, but it will now be pressured to reconsider. How should it respond?

Obama should apply the principles he outlined in a speech last month at West Point's commencement. In that speech, he pledged to assist Iraq (along with Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) in combating terrorist violence. In Iraq, that assistance has taken the form of munificent military aid including F-16 fighters, attack helicopters and Hellfire tactical missiles. If those resources haven't sufficed to enable Iraqi forces to resist the insurgents, that isn't a sufficient argument for putting American pilots in harm's way.

In his West Point speech, Obama also said that he would approve direct U.S. military action in response to specific threats against Americans, and cited drone strikes in Yemen and Somalia. While we're uncomfortable with the number of drone strikes the U.S. has carried out there and in Pakistan, if a terrorist is plotting an attack on Americans, it shouldn't matter whether he is located in Yemen or Iraq. But

that doesn't mean the U.S. should deploy aircraft — manned or unmanned — to shore up Maliki's government.

Obama's critics glibly blame the spiral of violence in Iraq on the president's failure to secure an agreement with Iraq that would have kept a residual U.S. military presence there. But it's not clear that a few thousand American trainers would have made a major difference in the readiness or resilience of Iraqi soldiers. If there was a time when the U.S. could control events in Iraq, that time has long passed. Obama should remember that as he ponders his "options."

Prime Minister Maliki Panics As Insurgents Gain

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

What's happening in Iraq is a disaster and it is astonishing that the Iraqis and the Americans, who have been sharing intelligence, seem to have been caught flat-footed by the speed of the insurgent victories and the army defections.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki is said to be in a panic. It is hard to be surprised by that, because more than anyone he is to blame for the catastrophe. Mr. Maliki has been central to the political disorder that has poisoned Iraq, as he wielded authoritarian power in favor of the Shiite majority at the expense of the minority Sunnis, stoked sectarian conflict and enabled a climate in which militants could gain traction.

With stunning efficiency, Sunni militants in recent days captured Mosul, the second-largest city; occupied facilities in the strategic oil-refining town of Baiji; and are now headed for Baghdad. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been forced to flee their homes and untold numbers have been killed.

The insurgency's gains will not be a threat just to Iraq if the militants, who have also been fighting in Syria, succeed in establishing a radical Islamic state on the Iraq-Syria border. No one should want that — not the Kurds, not the Turks and not the Iranians.

The deadly surge is the work of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which grew out of Al Qaeda in Iraq and is considered even more violent than its predecessor. Since the United States withdrew from Iraq at the end of 2011, the group has steadily gained strength and recruited thousands of foreign fighters; it broke with Al Qaeda earlier this year and is now viewed as a leader of global jihad.

As this week's events unfolded, it was alarming to learn of the swift capitulation of thousands of Iraqi Army troops who surrendered their weapons to the enemy and disappeared. After disbanding Saddam Hussein's army in 2003 after the invasion by coalition forces and dismantling the government, the United States spent years and many billions of dollars building a new Iraqi Army, apparently for naught. The militants have captured untold quantities of American-

supplied weaponry, including helicopters, and looted an estimated \$425 million from Mosul's banks.

The growing violence in Iraq was apparent throughout 2013, when more than 8,000 Iraqis were killed, including nearly 1,000 Iraqi security forces; news reports say the militants planned a takeover for more than a year. Given the Iraqi Army's cowardice, it is understandable that the Kurds, who operate a well-managed semiautonomous region in northern Iraq, on Thursday took control of Kirkuk, a disputed northern city with important oil resources. It signals one more step toward the breakup of the state.

The turmoil has revived a debate over whether President Obama should have left a small residual force after the 2011 American troop withdrawal. It's an academic argument, because the Iraqis refused. Falluja was the militants first big target, and Mr. Maliki did a turnabout last year and sought help from the White House, which quickly provided Hellfire missiles and low-tech surveillance drones. Other Iraqi requests — for more drones, F-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopter gunships — are still in the pipeline.

Last month, Mr. Maliki also asked for airstrikes. The United States has a strategic interest in Iraq's stability and Mr. Obama on Thursday said America was ready to do more, without going into detail. But military action seems like a bad idea right now. The United States simply cannot be sucked into another round of war in Iraq. In any case, airstrikes and new weapons would be pointless if the Iraqi Army is incapable of defending the country.

Why would the United States want to bail out a dangerous leader like Mr. Maliki, who is attempting to remain in power for a third term as prime minister? It is up to Iraq's leaders to show leadership and name a new prime minister who will share power, make needed reforms and include all sectarian and ethnic groups, especially disenfranchised Sunnis, in the country's political and economic life — if, indeed, it is not too late.

First Lady Pledges To Fight For Lunch Standards

By Darlene Superville

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michelle Obama on Thursday turned her annual garden harvest into a showcase for healthier school lunch standards and pledged to "fight until the bitter end" to keep them in place.

The House is soon to vote on a bill that would allow some schools to opt out of new federal requirements that school lunches include more whole grains, fruits and vegetables. The White House has threatened to veto the measure.

Mrs. Obama pushed for the new standards as part of her initiative against childhood obesity and, in recent weeks,

has been unusually outspoken in her criticism of the effort by Congress to allow some schools to ignore them.

The first lady said the standards are important because kids get most of their nutrition from meals eaten at school.

Taxpayers spend billions of dollars a year to provide school meals, and Mrs. Obama said it's their responsibility to make sure students eat well because research shows they do better in school as a result.

"I'm going to fight until the bitter end to make sure that every kid in this country continues to have the best nutrition that they can have in our schools, because these kids, all of these kids are worth it," Mrs. Obama said. "They are absolutely worth it.

She held a White House event last month with school nutrition directors who said the standards are working in their schools. School nutrition directors also were on hand for Thursday's harvest, which typically is attended by the students who helped plant the garden. The harvest, which marked Mrs. Obama's latest push to protect the standards, was moved inside the White House because of rain.

Bowls of broccoli, cauliflower, peas and other vegetables were brought into the State Dining Room, where Mrs. Obama, the nutrition directors and members of the White House kitchen staff helped the students make a healthy lunch – of salad.

House Republicans, meanwhile, have for a second time delayed consideration of the agriculture spending bill that includes the provision to let some schools opt out of the healthier meal standards.

The House was scheduled to vote on the bill this week, but a final vote was again delayed after this week's stunning defeat of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., in a primary election. Republicans say the bill won't be considered until Cantor's replacement is elected next Thursday. The opt-out language is not included in the Senate version of the spending bill.

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Obama Administration Knew About VA's Secret Wait Lists For Years

By Patrick Howley

[Daily Caller](#), June 13, 2014

The Obama administration knew about allegations of secret waiting lists at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as early as 2010, The Daily Caller has learned.

The current VA scandal involving secret waiting lists that led to preventable veteran deaths at the Phoenix VA Medical Center claimed the scalp of Obama-appointed former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, who resigned at the end of last month. Former White House Press Secretary Jay Carney

said that President Obama only found out about the VA wait-list scandal from watching the news.

But the Obama administration knew that an internal VA investigation into secret "paper" waiting lists was conducted in 2010 under Shinseki.

"We conducted this review to determine the validity of an allegation that senior officials in Veterans Integrated Service Network 20 (VISN) instructed employees at the Portland VA Medical Center to use unauthorized wait lists to hide access and scheduling problems," according to an August 17, 2010 VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) report entitled "Review of Alleged Use of Unauthorized Wait Lists at the Portland VA Medical Center," which was obtained by TheDC.

The report was based on an OIG review conducted in Portland, Oregon between March and June 2010. The facility, like all VA medical centers, was prohibited from keeping paper waiting lists separate from the official electronic waiting-list system.

"OIG has reported problems since 2005 with schedulers not following established procedures for making or recording medical appointments. This practice has resulted in data integrity weaknesses that impacted the reliability of patient waiting times and facility waiting lists," the report continued.

"The OIG received an anonymous e-mail alleging the use of unauthorized paper wait lists, and that the eye clinics had over 3,500 patients waiting more than 30 days for appointments," according to the report.

The IG report noted that "We did not substantiate the allegation" about the unauthorized wait lists but nonetheless found that some staff did not notify more than 2,000 patients of follow-up appointments.

"No one admitted to either instructing or being instructed to use unauthorized paper wait lists," the report stated. "We also conducted visual inspections of schedulers' work areas and found no evidence of paper wait lists."

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel is currently investigating claims of reprisal and abuse against VA whistleblowers in 19 different states.

"It's not that people haven't brought this up before, it's just the word 'secret' lists blew it up in the media," Vietnam Veterans of America's Richard Weidman revealed in a recent interview, noting the long-known existence of "handwritten" VA wait lists separate from the electronic systems.

Doctors And Congress Focus On Retaliation Against VA Employees

By Joe Davidson

[Washington Post](#), June 12, 2014

Joe Davidson writes the Federal Diary, a column about the federal workplace that celebrated its 80th birthday in November 2012.

In the heat of the controversy over gaming of patient waiting lists at veterans facilities, about 100 health-care providers gathered in Washington this week.

Though a persistent undercurrent, the scandal did not dominate discussions at the National Association of Veterans Affairs Physicians and Dentists (NAVAPD) conference, but a related issue rang a loud bell with participants.

Retaliation.

They clapped with approval when Katherine Mitchell, a physician at a Veterans Affairs facility in Arizona, said that “no one should have to lose their job or fear for their job for doing the right thing.”

Retaliation from management is a real concern among Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) employees — certainly among the doctors who nodded with approval when Mitchell and others spoke about the use of sham peer reviews as a way to punish those who complain too much or too openly or simply are in the way.

James Martin, a physician with the American Federation of Government Employees National VA Council, told the gathering that sham peer reviews are a problem in the department. In a later interview, he elaborated, saying that “orchestration of facts” related to issues involving contact with patients is an issue “at some facilities.” Sham reviews, he explained, can be used when management wants to replace or punish a doctor.

Gina Jackson, a VA spokeswoman, said the department “is absolutely committed to creating an environment in which employees feel free to voice their concerns without fear of reprisal. . . . Protecting employees from reprisal is a statutory obligation and a priority for the VA. Managers and supervisors have a responsibility for enforcing appropriate workplace behavior. Moreover, managers and supervisors are expected to take prompt action to deal with conduct identified as reprisal based on whistleblowing.”

Meanwhile, the nonprofit Project on Government Oversight has refused to turn over whistleblower files demanded by a subpoena from VA’s inspector general’s (IG) office. “It would cause irreparable damage to POGO’s fundamental mission of uncovering systemic problems in federal agency administration, as future whistleblowers would rightfully be suspicious that POGO might jeopardize their confidentiality and subject them to retaliation by government officials,” POGO said in a letter to the IG’s office.

Retaliation against agency whistleblowers also was discussed during Thursday’s House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing.

Republican Reps. Jeff Miller (Fla.) and Dan Benishek (Mich.), who both spoke to the NAVAPD conference the day before, asked a VA official about reports that VA employees were instructed not to talk with members of Congress.

Benishek, a physician and former VA employee, said agency doctors have told him they are “reprimanded and have this retribution if they try to change the system.”

Robert L. Jesse, the department’s principal deputy undersecretary for health, told the hearing “there was a caution put out,” an “ill-worded document” advising facility directors to wait until they received data from the central office before they released information “to congressionals.”

That caution, he continued, “was followed immediately by a statement of clarity” indicating that there was no prohibition against talking to members of Congress.

“We get terribly compromised,” Jesse added, “if we’ve got one person saying one thing and another person saying another.”

Miller, the committee chairman, seemed to accept that explanation. But shortly before the hearing adjourned, he returned to the subject, reading Jesse the law that calls for a potential five-year prison term for impeding a congressional inquiry.

“This is serious stuff,” Miller said with emphasis.

Jesse: “Yes sir.”

Miller: “I hope the department gets it.”

The hearing was held as the House and Senate consider legislation designed to shake up a VA that has been severely damaged by revelations of employees covering up long wait times for patients to get service. The FBI is investigating the possibility that some administrators lied about waiting lists to get performance awards.

The Senate approved a bill Wednesday that, among other things, calls for hiring more health professionals. Now that bill must be reconciled with previously approved House legislation. One difference is the way VA Senior Executive Service members would be treated.

The House would kill certain long-standing civil-service protections by eliminating appeal rights for fired VA senior executives. The Senate’s bill would severely weaken those protections, allowing employees just one week to appeal and requiring the Merit Systems Protection Board to rule on appeals within 21 days. That process now can take a year.

Each chamber approved its bill overwhelmingly. The harsher House bill was supported by two Democrats and a Republican from the local region who generally protect federal employees. Democratic Reps. Elijah E. Cummings (Md.) and Gerald E. Connolly (Va.) and Republican Rep. Frank Wolf (Va.) were among the 390 House members who voted for the House bill. The 33 members opposing it included Democratic Reps. Steny H. Hoyer, Chris Van Hollen and Donna F. Edwards of Maryland and James P. Moran of Virginia.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) voted in committee to approve a measure that, like the House bill, would do away with senior executive appeal rights.

Citing “systemic failures in our VA system,” she said that “these problems have dragged on long enough and must be addressed and corrected.” Mikulski said she also supports the bill allowing the workers truncated appeal rights, as passed by the Senate.

Edwards agrees with the need to correct the systemic failures. But noting that she is the “daughter of a career service member and veteran,” the lawmaker said weakening “employment protections” and “threatening our civil-service employees to the whims of political gamesmanship” is not the answer.

It's not the answer. But weakened, if not terminated, civil-service protections is what this Congress is determined to produce.

Russia Wants UN Action To Stop Violence In Ukraine

By Edith M. Lederer

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia introduced a U.N. Security Council resolution Thursday that strongly urges an immediate end to all violence in Ukraine and the launching of a national dialogue involving all political forces and regions.

The draft resolution, circulated to council members and obtained by The Associated Press, calls on all parties to immediately implement a “road map” to peace put forward by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on May 12.

Russia's U.N. ambassador Vitaly Churkin said the draft supersedes a text he circulated June 2 demanding an immediate halt to deadly clashes in eastern Ukraine, which has languished.

Western diplomats have insisted that any U.N. resolution reaffirm Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, a critical issue following Russia's invasion and annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula which the United States and the European Union refuse to recognize.

Like the June 2 draft, the newly proposed Russian resolution does not mention Ukraine's sovereignty or territorial integrity, which makes its approval by the Security Council highly unlikely.

Churkin said there was only a brief discussion of the text, with support from some council members and suggestions from others. He said council experts would meet Friday to go over the text “to try to accomplish this very quickly.”

Lithuania's U.N. Ambassador Raimonda Murmokaite called the resolution “another surprise ... like a rabbit out of the box.”

Any resolution on Ukraine has to “insist on territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of Ukraine's borders and

we have to clearly name insurgents and militant separatists and what they're doing,” she said.

Lithuania and some others will also express concern “that there's military movement across Russia's border including recent information on three tanks which have crossed into (Ukraine's) territory,” Murmokaite said. “For Russia not to be able to take care of its own borders and not to prevent the flow of arms, insurgents and military capabilities is a highly troubling situation.”

The draft expresses deep concern at the intensification of hostilities and killing of civilians in eastern Ukraine, where government forces have battled pro-Russian rebels for two months. Churkin noted reports of the use of white phosphorous munitions, which are banned, by the Ukrainian side.

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In Ukraine Crisis, Tanks On One Hand And Words Of Peace On The Other

By Carol Morello And Michael Birnbaum

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

KIEV, Ukraine — Words and images clashed Thursday as separatists drove three tanks across the Russian border into Ukraine, according to Ukrainian officials, and Russia's top diplomat said the insurgents are ready for a pause in the conflict.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said the tanks and several armored personnel carriers entered eastern Ukraine through a checkpoint manned by rebels in the Luhansk region. He said government troops attacked the convoy when it reached the neighboring Donetsk region, destroying part of it. The claim could not be independently verified.

In Moscow, meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Kiev must show its peaceful intentions before a truce can be reached. “We know that the self-defense forces in the southeast are prepared for a cease-fire, but according to the rules, the first step needs to be made by the Kiev authorities,” he told reporters.

It was not clear which pro-Russian forces he spoke for, if any. Separatist factions in eastern Ukraine have clashed with one another in addition to government forces. Lavrov's remarks came a day after an unusual appearance in Moscow by a top Donetsk separatist leader, Denis Pushilin, who met with a Russian nationalist politician and attended a pro-separatist rally.

In a sign of the region's tension, an explosion left a van in flames Thursday night outside the Donetsk administration building, which has been taken over by separatists. The breakaway Donetsk People's Republic said on Twitter that

the van was used by Pushilin but that he was not in it, the Associated Press reported. Four people were reported injured.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by telephone Thursday about ways to stop the violence, the Kremlin said.

There were signs that not all separatists are willing to lay down their arms. A video that appeared Thursday on YouTube showed two men, one with the brim of his hat pulled over his eyes and the other in a balaclava, vowing to "hunt" commanders of Ukrainian troops fighting the rebels. The authenticity of the video could not be verified, however.

Also Thursday, Russia seemed one step closer to cutting off the flow of natural gas to Ukraine next week, a day after negotiations over payments for supplies broke down.

If Russian state-owned Gazprom is not paid \$2 billion by Monday, the energy company will take steps that would result in the cutoff of gas supplies to Ukraine, chief executive Alexei Miller said Thursday, according to the Interfax news agency.

"The stance of Ukraine is open blackmail. No constructive steps and no compromises occurred from the very beginning, and it appears to be a wish to escalate our relations in gas sector to the limit," Miller said. "This timeline will not be moved anymore."

Russia and Ukraine have quarreled over the price of natural gas, with Russia offering a price of about \$385 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas. Ukraine says the price is high and politically motivated and has threatened to take the dispute to international arbitration. If the gas supplies are cut off Monday, analysts say, Ukraine still has enough stored gas to last for at least two months, but the risk is that a cutoff could create a Europe-wide shortage this winter if not enough gas is pumped into Ukrainian storage tanks ahead of time. Ukraine is a key transit point for Russian gas supplies to Europe.

Ukrainian Minister: 3 Tanks Cross From Russia

By David McHugh And Jim Heintz
[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's interior minister says that three tanks have crossed into Ukrainian territory from Russia and were attacked by his country's forces.

The Interfax news agency quoted Arsen Avakov as saying that a "column" with armored vehicles crossed from Russia through border control points controlled by pro-Russian separatists near the Dyakove village in eastern Ukraine.

He said vehicles including automobiles and armored personnel carriers crossed the border. He said that three tanks went to the town of Snizhne about 40 kilometers (24.86

miles) from Dyakove. One remained there while two others left in the direction of the town of Horlivka and were engaged by the Ukrainian military.

Avakov said that "part of this column has been destroyed" by Ukrainian forces.

Russia has denied sending troops or equipment into Ukraine and no independent confirmation was immediately available.

Avakov said the incursion took place despite Russian statements of interest in a peaceful solution and intent to increase border controls.

The reports followed statements earlier Thursday by Russia's foreign minister that the pro-Moscow separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine are ready for a cease-fire but that Kiev has to initiate the process.

Sergey Lavrov also was quoted by Russian news agencies as saying Moscow will introduce a resolution in the United Nations on the Ukrainian crisis, but that Russia was not seeking authorization to send in peacekeeping troops. The Ukrainian rebels have suggested that Russia should send peacekeepers, but Moscow says that could only be done with UN authorization.

Ukraine's government and Western countries allege that Russia is fomenting or supporting the uprising in the east, where insurgents have declared two regions independent and are seeking annexation by Russia. Moscow denies it has agents in eastern Ukraine, but it is unclear to what extent it has contacts or influence with the rebels.

Lavrov said that "We know that the rebels in the southeast are ready to hold fire, but the first step by all rights should be made by the Kiev authorities."

He said the proposed UN resolution would concentrate on demanding fulfillment of proposals set forth in a so-called "road map" for resolving the conflict developed by the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The OSCE's secretary-general on Thursday visited a camp in Russia for refugees from the conflict in Ukraine's east and called for the fighting to end.

According to the Interfax news agency, Lamberto Zannier said Thursday that the conflict in the east "is craziness which must be stopped."

Russia says some 30,000 people have fled the fighting.

Ukraine's new president, Petro Poroshenko, this week called for establishing safe-passage corridors for civilians who want to escape the violence in the east, but no visible steps toward creating them have been seen.

Heintz contributed from Moscow.

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Ukraine Accuses Russia Of Letting Rebels Bring In Tanks

By Natalia Zinets And Timothy Heritage

[Reuters](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Russia Sending Tanks Across Border Into Ukraine, Kiev Says

By Sergei L. Loiko, Carol J. Williams

[Los Angeles Times](#), June 13, 2014

Russia has gone back on its promise to secure its border with Ukraine against further infusions of weapons and fighters, with at least three Russian tanks and several armored vehicles spotted Thursday in the eastern Ukraine town of Snizhnye, a top Ukrainian official said.

"Columns of armored personnel vehicles and artillery have entered through checkpoints seized by terrorists," Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said at a news conference in Kiev, the capital, citing his nation's intelligence sources and referring to separatists in the east.

Avakov said Ukrainian troops engaged the Russian convoy and destroyed some of the armor.

News agencies in the region also reported sighting Russian tanks for the first time since rebels took up arms against the Ukrainian government in March.

Dmitry Tymchuk, head of the Kiev-based Center for Military and Political Research, wrote on his Facebook page that an armored convoy was seen heading for Donetsk, the largest city held by the rebels.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had promised Ukraine's newly elected president, billionaire Petro Poroshenko, to collaborate in sealing the Ukraine-Russia border to prevent arms and mercenaries from crossing into the fight. The two leaders met in Normandy a week ago on the sidelines of ceremonies marking the 70th anniversary of the D-day invasion.

In Moscow, the official Itar-Tass news agency reported that Putin and Poroshenko spoke by telephone Thursday but made no mention of the reported military hardware sightings. The news agency quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying the two leaders discussed Poroshenko's plan for bringing an end to the armed confrontations in eastern Ukraine but gave no details.

Poroshenko's spokesman, Svyatoslav Tsegolko, reported via Facebook that the Ukrainian president called the armored intrusion "unacceptable."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Deshchytsia said at a news briefing in Kiev that the Ukrainians were waiting for Moscow's response to Poroshenko's proposals for countering

the separatists who have seized control of much of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions along the border.

"The contact group has met. It worked out conceptual approaches toward implementation of this plan. We are now waiting for Russia's response," Deshchytsia said, referring to several meetings this week of negotiators from Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Vasily Krutov, head of the Ukrainian military operation to push back the separatists, told the online newspaper Ukrainskaya Pravda that measures were being taken "to ensure the border closure in the next few days."

Tanks, Of Unknown Origin, Roll Into Ukraine

By Andrew E. Kramer

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

DONETSK, Ukraine — Ukraine's interior minister claimed on Thursday that an armored column from Russia had crossed the border into eastern Ukraine overnight and had fought with Ukrainian troops during the day.

Russia did not immediately respond to the minister's allegation, and there was no independent confirmation that an incursion had taken place.

If it did, the event would signal a significant escalation in the simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine, where pro-Russian separatist militias have seized government buildings in several cities and have resisted government troops sent to restore control.

Russia is widely believed to be supporting and aiding the separatist militias, and significant numbers of men who describe themselves as volunteer fighters have crossed into Ukraine from Russia. But the precise role Russia has played in the violence in the east has been hard to discern.

The Ukrainian interior minister, Arsen Avakov, told reporters in Kiev, the capital, that the armored column included three tanks, as well as armored personnel carriers and armored cars, and had traversed the border at a separatist-controlled crossing.

A video posted online appeared to show a tank, spewing exhaust, clanking down a street in Snizhne, a town about midway between Donetsk, a provincial capital controlled by separatists, and the Russian frontier. Reuters reported that two of its journalists saw the tanks in Snizhne but could not establish where they had come from; separatists on the scene said the tanks had been taken from a Ukrainian military warehouse. Late Thursday, photographs that circulated online were said to show the tanks on a boulevard in Donetsk.

The pro-Russian militias are known to have armored personnel carriers that were seized from Ukrainian forces, but they have not previously been known to possess any tanks.

After Mr. Avakov's news conference, the newly elected president of Ukraine, Petro O. Poroshenko, telephoned

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to object to the incursion, a spokesman for Mr. Poroshenko said. The spokesman, Svyatoslav Tsegolko, wrote on his Facebook page that Mr. Poroshenko had told Mr. Putin that allowing tanks to cross into his country was “unacceptable.”

Mr. Putin’s spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, told the Itar-Tass news agency that the two leaders had spoken, but he made no mention of the Ukrainian accusation. He said Mr. Poroshenko had congratulated Mr. Putin on the occasion of Russia Day, a national holiday celebrated annually on June 12, and then “informed Putin about his plan for a settlement in the southeast of Ukraine.”

Ukraine has repeatedly accused Russia of deliberately allowing men and weapons to cross the two countries’ porous border, allegations Russia has denied. Last week, Ukrainian officials said Russia had allowed armored vehicles to cross the border at Marinovka; it later turned out that separatists had been operating near the border but had not attacked across it.

At his news conference on Thursday, Mr. Avakov told reporters: “We observed three tanks, which, according to our information, crossed the border and were in Snizhne by morning. After this, two of them moved toward Horlivka,” a town farther west. “They were attacked by our forces,” he said. “A battle is underway.”

The tanks and other armored vehicles crossed “despite the Russian Federation’s statements that it welcomes the peace process, and that the order had been given to strengthen border patrols,” Mr. Avakov said.

Russia has raised its own allegations against Ukraine. The Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, complained on Tuesday that the Ukrainian army had not halted operations in the east even though talks meant to achieve a cease-fire were underway among Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Poroshenko has said that he is prepared to allow Russian fighters in Ukraine to return to Russia safely, to grant amnesty to local militants who are not accused of grave crimes and to discuss giving regional governments more power and autonomy, but that he will not negotiate with armed separatists.

Whether tanks actually crossed the border or not, the allegation that they had done so was a setback for the talks.

Violence continued on Thursday evening in the east. At least seven people were wounded after a car bomb exploded outside the regional administration building that is the headquarters of the self-declared People’s Republic of Donetsk, in the center of the city.

The local news media reported that the blast was an assassination attempt on a separatist leader, Denis Pushilin, but that he was not harmed. If that was the motive, it would be the second attempt on his life in two weeks, because of internecine fighting among separatist groups or between

them and Ukrainian nationalist organizations backed by the government in Kiev.

Russia signaled on Thursday that it would keep up its economic pressure on Ukraine. Aleksei B. Miller, the head of the giant Russian gas monopoly Gazprom, said in televised remarks that Russia would not extend a deadline for Ukraine to pay \$1.95 billion for natural gas beyond 10 a.m. on Monday.

A Top Russian Official Who Once Admired The US Is Now On A Sanctions List

By Michael Birnbaum

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

MOSCOW — Yevgeny Bushmin tried to make his nation more American. Now he can’t believe he’s been slapped with U.S. sanctions.

The Russia lawmaker’s faith in U.S.-style capitalism and democracy drove him into politics in the chaotic years after the breakup of the Soviet Union. But after he helped lead legislators in a March vote that granted President Vladimir Putin the power to invade Ukraine, the United States put Bushmin on its sanctions list.

The Obama administration now is threatening more sanctions by early next month that could deeply disrupt life in Russia by squeezing the flow of dollars to the country’s financial system.

In a conflict in which the two sides disagree about fundamental facts, the Obama administration says that sanctions are hurting Putin’s inner circle. Russian leaders retort that the measures are simply helping unite their nation against America.

For onetime reformers such as Bushmin, 55, who is faced with the nation he once sought to emulate no longer allowing him on its territory, the attempt to isolate Russia is deeply misguided — and has set relations back to a Cold War time zone.

The chances for an enduring alliance in the 1990s were real, said Bushmin, who as an entrepreneurial young businessman-turned-politician once preached private ownership and democracy to voters in the industrial city of Nizhny Novgorod. Now he is the deputy speaker of Russia’s upper house of parliament and a member of the Putin-allied United Russia party. His once boyish sandy hair has turned salt-and-pepper.

After the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, “I was sort of euphoric” about the United States, Bushmin said in an interview in Russia’s imposing Federation Council building. Now he says his youthful faith might have been misplaced.

Back then, he said, “I was sure that people of the United States, who had come there from all over the world, were pioneers,” Bushmin said. “These people should have a

very good attitude toward those who were choosing a new way.”

But when Russia began to rebuild, “we started to raise our voice,” he said. “Economically, when we rose from our knees a little bit, tense moments followed.”

Tensions between the United States and Russia have been building ever since the fall of the Soviet Union.

But some of the ill will is a far newer phenomenon, dating to Putin’s blaming the United States for stirring up anti-government protesters in 2011, a charge that U.S. officials strenuously deny.

In the early 1990s, there was a feeling in the United States that “if you made the right tweaks, Russia would break out in a full-fledged capitalist democracy,” said Fiona Hill, who co-authored a biography of Putin.

“We miscalculated,” she said.

The United States could have sent more money to Russia in the early 1990s, she said. Or it could have worked harder to include Russia when the European Union and NATO expanded into Eastern Europe. The war in Iraq and a 2011 NATO operation in Libya added yet more stress.

But there could be a simpler answer, said Michael McFaul, who until February was the U.S. ambassador in Moscow: Putin’s response to urban middle-class protesters, who took to the streets starting in December 2011, frustrated by the lack of a political voice and what they said were fraudulent parliamentary elections.

“Putin feared them, he cracked down on them, and he needed us to be the enemy,” McFaul said.

On a snowy day in December 1995, Bushmin, then a voluble member of the lower house of parliament fighting a losing election battle, stood on a mostly deserted factory floor and pitched himself to a skeptical crowd of workers.

Wearing a dark cloth coat and a fur hat, he tried to convince them that he could help them with their daily troubles, such as grocery stores that had no food on their shelves and unemployment caused by state-run businesses shutting their doors. The new era, for all its hardship, was still better than the Soviet Union, he said.

Many people still viewed capitalism with suspicion, feeling that a society where some people were rich and others were poor was unjust. Even the word “democracy” had taken on bad connotations, mixing in voters’ heads with the uncertainties of the era. Bushmin worked his hardest to salvage the concept of elections and voting, which had been a lodestar for him ever since he founded a software company in the waning, liberalizing years of the Soviet Union marked by the Perestroika reform movement.

“I’m not allergic to democracy,” he told The Washington Post in 1995. “The only advice I have is let’s give it a different name and keep doing it.”

Democracy also sometimes means defeat, and Bushmin lost that election to a Communist. He soon wound

up as the top official of the state tax service, then as a deputy finance minister during President Boris Yeltsin’s final two years in office and Putin’s first year. In 2001, he became a member of the upper house of parliament, where he has been ever since.

“I look more conservatively at all these changes than I used to back then,” Bushmin said in the recent interview. “I am absolutely sure that there is no such revolution that would strengthen the economy. Revolutions destroy the economy.”

When the Treasury Department announced that Bushmin was being sanctioned, it said in a statement: “On March 1, 2014, Bushmin publicly supported the deployment of Russian forces in Ukraine.” A Treasury Department spokeswoman declined a request for elaboration. The European Union, Switzerland and Australia have also targeted him and other Russian officials with travel bans and asset freezes.

At the time of the vote, Bushmin warned that more than 140,000 people had fled Ukraine to Russia since the beginning of unrest in Ukraine in November 2013. That claim was never confirmed by independent evidence.

“I do not understand what I did wrong so that the attitude of the people of the U.S. changed toward me,” he said. He added that he learned of the sanctions on a U.S.-designed iPhone and at first thought someone was playing a joke on him.

The sanctions were “a revelation,” he said. “That was unexpected. I did not think that their response would be as it is.”

The youngest member of Russia’s lower house of parliament, Robert Shlegel, 29, might be the closest modern-day analogue to Bushmin’s younger politically minded self. But more than two decades after the collapse Soviet Union, the West has lost the allure it once held for many ambitious Russians who wanted to build a better future for their country.

“The events that are happening around us are changing our views,” Shlegel said of himself and his peers. “At the end of the Soviet Union, there was love for the United States. Now everything from the Soviet Union is fashionable again.”

Incumbents Fear Cantor’s Loss Will Fill Tea Party’s Sails

By Carl Hulse

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — Congressional Republicans thought they had found an answer for the conservative insurgencies that had toppled unsuspecting incumbents in recent years: Be prepared, be aggressive and be conservative.

The approach had been working pretty well as senior Republicans in the Senate and the House beat back challenges from the right in the primaries. They hoped to shut

out Tea Party-allied groups entirely and deter them from similar disruptive efforts in the future.

Then Senator Thad Cochran was forced into a runoff in Mississippi that opened the door to the possibility of a high-profile Tea Party upset later this month. Now, Representative Eric Cantor's shocking defeat has battered the door down altogether, giving conservative activists a political scalp of the first magnitude and showing that a populist movement some saw as flagging still has the power to rattle the establishment.

"All the credit goes to the activists who did the work and the candidate who was willing to stick his neck out, but the trend is fairly clear," said Matt Kibbe, president of FreedomWorks, a Tea Party group, of the victory by David Brat over Mr. Cantor. "Not only are we winning some unwinnable races, but we are changing the incentives that all Republicans face."

FreedomWorks and other leading Tea Party organizations did not put money and resources behind Mr. Brat, a college professor, like they have in the case of Chris McDaniel, who is opposing Mr. Cochran in Mississippi. That has led some critics to suggest that Tea Party groups are taking credit for a victory in Virginia that they had not earned.

But Mr. Brat was propelled by grass-roots conservative activists and conservative talk radio — typical elements of a Tea Party candidacy — and the Tea Party wing has hailed it as a triumph.

As Republicans absorbed the results on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, some who have already crossed paths with Tea Party challengers this year said they expected that the Cantor loss would provide momentum to Mr. McDaniel and conservative challengers in primaries yet to come in states like Kansas.

"I do think it is going to give the Tea Party a bump," said Representative Mike Simpson, an Idaho Republican who held off a concerted Tea Party challenge in a primary this year.

Tea Party challengers themselves were more than ready to predict victories ahead. Milton Wolf, who is opposing Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas, used the Cantor defeat to take a shot at Mr. Roberts, whom Mr. Wolf has criticized for not owning a home in Kansas and spending most of his time in the Washington area.

"Eric Cantor isn't the only incumbent from Virginia who is going to lose his primary this year," Mr. Wolf said in a statement. "On Aug. 5, it's Pat Roberts's turn."

Others were not persuaded that Mr. Cantor's loss, while momentous, was particularly portentous. They noted that Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, joined Mr. Simpson of Idaho in easily vanquishing a Tea Party opponent with substantial organizational backing. In addition, they said, each race has unique characteristics.

"It's one election," said Representative Peter T. King, Republican of New York. "I don't know how much it was local issues. Mike Simpson, they went after him for a year, and he

won big. McConnell won big. Thad Cochran didn't, and obviously Eric didn't."

Even if the movement cannot pull off big upsets in Kansas or Tennessee, where Senator Lamar Alexander also has a Tea Party opponent, it is still influencing the course of events in Washington and pushing the Republican Party and its candidates to the right.

Mr. Cantor's defeat will make incumbents much more reluctant to entertain any compromise with President Obama and the Democrats on issues like immigration, or to make votes that inflame the Republican base such as increasing the federal debt limit.

"Americans are very, very frustrated with Washington, and they are serious about wanting change," said Representative John Fleming, Republican of Louisiana. "They're frustrated that our leadership is not really going after this administration even harder than they are. We're doing all these oversight hearings. And I'm not sure exactly what we could do, but they're still frustrated."

Mr. Kibbe, whose group is ramping up its get-out-the-vote operation on behalf of Mr. McDaniel in Mississippi, said he saw many parallels between the Cantor race and the effort to unseat Mr. Cochran.

The opposition painted them both as Washington insiders tied to the capital's establishment and lobbying community and increasingly out of touch with voters back home. It can be a potent message in a political environment where some voters are clearly angry about the direction of Congress.

"Eric Cantor is the poster boy for the problem of D.C. interests dominating the Republican policy agenda," said Mr. Kibbe. "Everyone is focused on immigration, but crony capitalism and corrupt insiders was really the overarching theme."

He said he expected other Tea Party challengers to feed off the Virginia results.

"There is nothing like winning to encourage activists to double down and work hard," he said.

What Did Tea Party Take From Eric Cantor Defeat? New Life, Perhaps.

By Francine Kiefer

[Christian Science Monitor](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — With the upset loss of Rep. Eric Cantor to an even more conservative House candidate this week, will the lid blow off the simmering tea party?

Since last fall, the Republican establishment in Washington has, more or less, been able to keep its most conservative wing from boiling over, especially in the hot-headed US House.

That control began with the deal to end the partial government shutdown last October, moved along with a

bipartisan agreement on the federal budget, passed the shoals of the debt ceiling in February, and on into a primary season in which tea party candidates were buried nearly everywhere (big exception: Texas; big question mark: Mississippi).

But with Mr. Cantor so roundly defeated by tea party-backed Dave Brat in Virginia on Tuesday, the GOP pot could well boil over again. That's why the internal election to replace Cantor as majority leader of the House Republicans is taking place so quickly, on June 19.

Republican leaders "just want to get it over with," says Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R) of Georgia, surrounded by a scrum of reporters trying to gauge where the race is going. "These inner-party elections can be so divisive."

No kidding.

True, such elections are determined mostly by personal relationships. And it looks now – though things can change – as if "establishment" Republican Kevin McCarthy of California may well have the votes to move from his job as the No. 3 Republican, where he whips votes, into Cantor's slot as No. 2, who determines what comes to the floor.

But a battle that includes very conservative Republicans is on for Mr. McCarthy's job – with some conservatives hoping for a completely new leadership team when a new Congress convenes in January.

Tea party conservatives read the stunning Cantor upset as a signal that voters are rejecting tentative policies on issues they care about, such as spending, debt, size of government, and borders. Without a stronger agenda, voters may be inclined to retire other GOP lawmakers, as they did Cantor.

"We're secure in a Republican majority, but I [think] the leadership and the establishment in general has lost its way," said Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R) of Kansas in an interview this week. Mr. Huelskamp, elected in the tea party wave of 2010, was among a group of conservatives who tried to oust Speaker John Boehner last year. The message from Virginia voters this week was not only to Cantor, he says, "but to the Republican leadership team."

The divisions within the Republican Party, especially in the House, fall along two lines: strategy – how to govern and win elections – and policy approaches to the nation's problems.

Mr. Boehner's governing strategy is to move conservative bills, mostly small-bore, whenever he can, and to compromise with Democrats when he must. Much of the work of the House GOP ends up in the dustbin of the Democrat-controlled Senate. Unlike the tea-party faction of his party, he did not favor last year's government shutdown and was not willing to put the credibility of the United States on the line by defaulting on the nation's debt this past winter. Conservatives see brinkmanship as sticking up for principle.

As for winning elections, both Boehner and Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Kentuckian who leads the Republican minority in the Senate, are sticking to a mostly anti-Obama strategy for November midterms. No big-ideas agenda. No "Contract with America," such as that touted by Republican Newt Gingrich in 1994. That's too risky, especially when the president is giving Republicans so much to criticize.

But that's exactly what conservatives are agitating for – which leads to another point of division. The problem with coming up with a positive agenda to run on is that Republicans would have to agree on one. That would expose splits, and that's what the leadership in both chambers wants to avoid.

Those splits are in plain sight, right there in Cantor's own district. Mr. Brat battered Cantor over two of them: immigration reform and big business.

Even though Cantor opposes comprehensive immigration reform, Brat went after him for backing "amnesty" for one group, children of illegal immigrants. And even though Brat is a free-market capitalist like Cantor, he's also an ethicist. He railed against the incumbent's association with big-bank "crooks" and "crony capitalism" generally. It's the kind of split that cheers folks on Main Street but makes Wall Street worry.

In 2015 and 2016, these policy debates are more likely to be determined in the race for president than in the halls of Congress. But conservatives such as Huelskamp in the House and Sen. Mike Lee (R) of Utah in the Senate are impatient for a conservative agenda. They and other conservatives in both chambers are actively discussing ideas they hear from constituents, so they can be turned into positions to bring to voters.

Some establishment candidates also see the need for something positive to sell, and suggest an agenda that might include smallish items like the Keystone XL pipeline and more tax breaks for small business.

"I'm tired of complaining about Democrats all the time," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R) of South Carolina in his primary victory speech on Tuesday. "I want to say something positive about us."

The question is, what?

What Eric Cantor Could Have Learned From Lindsey Graham

By Mary Troyan

[USA Today](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — Republican strategists are holding up Sen. Lindsey Graham's primary victory on Tuesday as a model for how mainstream GOP incumbents can beat back right-wing insurgencies.

Graham was viewed as having chinks in his conservative armor heading into the primary, but he easily

dispatched six Tea Party challengers, winning every county in the state and taking 56% of the vote. He is favored for re-election to a third term in November, when he will face Democratic state Sen. Brad Hutto.

Graham's strategy — coming home often, blanketing the state with advertising and confronting conservative criticism head-on — could merit a chapter in future political science textbooks.

"This is classic Politics 101," said Katon Dawson, a former South Carolina Republican Party chairman who runs an independent political action committee that supports Graham's re-election.

"A lot of times guys go up there and stick their head in the Potomac and it fills up with water. Lindsey Graham was from West Main Street, South Carolina."

The six Tea Party candidates argued that Graham has been in Congress too long and is too willing to compromise with Democrats on issues like immigration, and they criticized him for backing President Obama's two Supreme Court nominees.

Some Tea Party activists initially hoped their field of candidates would narrow to whichever one appeared best positioned to force Graham into a runoff. But as the campaign wore on, the six dug in, hoping they would collectively hold him under 50% of the primary vote.

It didn't work.

"They thought these so-called outside forces were going to come in and spend a bunch of money, and the help would come, but I bet they all feel like George Custer," said Warren Tompkins, a South Carolina Republican strategist. "The reinforcements never made it and there is death on the battlefield."

The military metaphor is apt.

Graham, a colonel in the Air Force Reserves and a national defense hawk, shored up his conservative bona fides by calling for a more robust Pentagon budget to counter what he says is the rising threat of radical Islam across the globe.

And in the campaign's final days, two national security topics dominated the headlines: the House GOP's decision to appoint a select committee to investigate the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, and the Obama administration's decision to swap five Taliban fighters for Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl.

Graham says both are Democratic scandals.

"That really played to his strengths," Tompkins said.

Graham's primary victory is even more instructive when compared to House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's stunning primary defeat the same night to a virtually unknown college professor also backed by the Tea Party.

Cantor was blindsided by the challenge from the right, while Graham began preparing for it years ago by raising millions of dollars. Cantor offered mixed signals on whether immigration reform legislation should offer undocumented

immigrants a path to legal status, while Graham co-sponsored legislation including that provision.

"Whereas Eric Cantor often tried to be all things to all Republicans — one minute a moderate, the next a conservative, one minute an ally of Speaker (John) Boehner, the next a leading opponent — Graham has stayed the course on most issues," said Geoffrey Skelley, associate editor of Sabato's Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia Center for Politics.

"Thus, when Graham has taken ownership of his one or two seeming affronts to his party, voters are more likely to overlook those breaches of the party line."

Graham made no apologies for supporting an immigration compromise opposed by conservatives who aren't aligned with business interests. He argued it was a problem that could be solved only with bipartisan input, and that Republicans were suffering politically for fighting such a deal.

In comments Tuesday before the polls closed, Graham told reporters in Greenville that a primary result giving him more than 50% of the vote would affirm his strategy.

"It would mean keep being Lindsey Graham and that conservatism is appreciated but working to solve problems is equally appreciated," Graham said.

"Somebody has got to fix immigration and the fact I've tried, I think, will be a statement by the primary electorate that we want you to try to do hard things, not just talk all the time."

Graham said his race was a referendum on practical conservatism versus ideology.

"I am proud to say I come from a long line of practical conservatives," Graham said.

The Man Who Upended The Republican Party

By David Nather, Sarah Wheaton, Alex Isenstadt

[Politico](#), June 12, 2014

GLEN ALLEN, Va. — The day after Dave Brat upended the political world by toppling the Republican expecting to be the next House Speaker, his 23-year-old campaign manager was so swamped that he didn't even return a call for his boss from Speaker John Boehner's office. There were, in fact, thousands more phone messages, he said, from Wolf Blitzer to Diane Sawyer.

The young campaign manager, Zac Werrell, didn't know where to start given that the press spokesman, sensing imminent defeat, had quit 10 days earlier. And since his boss had just blown an interview with MSNBC's Chuck Todd by whiffing on basic policy questions, Werrell only let Brat go on the air with Mark Levin, the talk radio host, as a favor to Levin for promoting the campaign.

"We're not going to be making any statements until we get professional PR help," Werrell said in an interview, clearly more in crisis mode than celebratory mode on Wednesday in his tiny campaign office in a strip mall here. (By Wednesday

night, he had hired one communications staffer: Rachel Semmel, a former spokeswoman for Kentucky Senate candidate Matt Bevin.)

If his aide, who operated from a single flip phone, was overwhelmed, imagine the unlikely winner. A CNN crew had to flag Brat down as he was driving on Thursday to get a brief statement: "I need a few days to decompress after that election." He added this plea: "I'll be with you as soon as I can. I'm just so happy with the outcome of the election and I literally have a thousand e-mails, a thousand voice mails. I'm just trying to catch up on everything."

For Dave Brat, the newfound Republican sensation who is expected to breeze through the general election in this conservative district, the attention, scrutiny and interview requests will only intensify. In dozens of interviews with the 49-year-old's colleagues, students and neighbors, and in an examination of his published writing, a portrait emerges of a popular local professor who's well-liked by colleagues and students, always makes time for his students if they need it, and loves to talk about issues and ethics. His approach is far more theoretical than the practical, policy-oriented way favored by most Washington politicians.

Brat is a religious man whose beliefs are the underpinnings of most of his political ideas. But his precise views are a bit of a mystery: He calls himself a Calvinist, colleagues say, but he says he attends a Catholic church and his campaign says he's Catholic.

He may be the new tea party hero, but Brat really isn't a tea party guy. His writings show that he's closer to Milton Friedman and Ayn Rand than tea party talking points. Indeed, he fits the ivory tower mold – the kind of academic who makes small talk with his colleagues at the campus gym by chatting about how to create the perfect ethical system. He savors the role of an anti-politician, but this is not another Joe the Plumber. This is Dave the Professor.

"He believes he's running on his own principles, his own sense of right and wrong," said Elliot Meyer, one of Brat's students at Randolph-Macon College, the liberal arts school in Ashland, Va., where Brat has taught since 1996. Meyer is studying the impact of the tea party on the 2014 elections — and suddenly has a compelling case study in his economics professor.

Another student, Mikhaila Calice, a political science and international studies major who took his international development class, said she was struck by the style of Brat's stump speech: it sounded like a seminar on economics and history. It was "a lot different than keywords and talking-head-type conversation," she said.

But, Calice conceded, "It might just be that he doesn't have a lot of practice."

Indeed, it's not clear that Brat is ready for the rough and tumble of Washington politics — let alone the enormous expectations he may face in Congress as the tea party hero

who just sent the entire House Republican leadership into turmoil.

In an interview with POLITICO in April, Brat sounded conspiratorial about the Benghazi attacks, saying at one point, "My guess is Republican leadership did something related to Benghazi that they don't want coming out. That's the best of what I've heard. There's something a little fishy there."

Summarizing the rationale for his candidacy, he said, "Why am I running for the United States Congress? Because Washington, D.C. is absolutely broke from head to toe right now." He sounded overwhelmed by Eric Cantor's barrage of ads against him, saying of one, "It tells more lies in 30 words than I've ever seen. And I've taught college for 18 years. I don't know where to start."

Brat laid out the philosophy of what at the time he said was a daunting but possible quest: "Eric Cantor is philosophically very different from me. The folks he listens to (are) the Business Roundtable and the Chamber of Commerce. And he follows the big business agenda very good. If you're in big business, Eric's been very good to you and he gets a lot of donations because of that. Right? Very powerful. Very good at fundraising because he favors big business."

But after his victory, Brat couldn't answer basic policy questions in the MSNBC interview, such as whether there should be a federal minimum wage. Brat had prided himself on giving "30-minute stump speeches on policy" that focused on "serious issues" — as he told Sean Hannity with pride in an election-night interview — and later explained he stumbled by saying he was just tired after a big election night.

But missteps shouldn't be a total surprise. He's from the world of academia — not practical politics — with writings that have touched on everything from the virtues of free markets to religion. And his colleagues say these are the kinds of things he talks about when he's trying to strike up small talk.

"We'll be in the gym together," said Charles Gowan, a biology professor at the college, "and I can't tell you how many times he's said something along the lines, to me, of: I've got these ideas on a perfect ethical system, and here are my thoughts, what do you think?"

"He knows I don't really agree with him politically," said Gowan, fresh from studying trout in his lab on the campus. "But he wants to have the conversations. That is quintessential Dave, to engage in the debate."

Dave the professor: Hitler comparisons

At Randolph-Macon College, Brat's teachings range from an ethics program that has become one of the school's most popular minors — according to the school's president, Robert R. Lindgren — to a course on "forecasting and foretelling" that promised a look at future trends in economics, world demographics, stock market trends, and the future of Social Security and Medicare.

"Everyone has a History course in college but not everyone gets a Future course," the course description read.

As a member of Congress, Brat probably would have to drop the Hitler comparisons he could get away with in academia. In one paper that discussed the impact of a weak church on society, Brat wrote that "we appear to be a bit passive. Hitler came along, and he did not meet with unified resistance. I have the sinking feeling that it could all happen again, quite easily."

But his professorial background also provides a more fully developed picture of Brat's true thinking. Brat insists to anyone who will listen that he's not just a typical tea party candidate, and his academic background shows that he has good reason to say that.

His writings include plenty of tributes to free-market conservatism, and in one paper, he lays out Ayn Rand's "case for liberty from the ground up." But there are also some surprising departures — like one paper that suggests that states can prime their economies by investing in education and research. Another endorses the No Child Left Behind law and suggests mandatory teaching seminars so teachers don't take black students less seriously than white students.

That background paints a different picture of Brat than one might expect from all the tea party support he won. As a candidate, Brat has talked about opposing "amnesty" for illegal immigrants, term limits for members of Congress, gun owners' rights and returning power to the states through the 10th amendment. Brat's hardline focus on opposing immigration reform has surprised some of his colleagues, who say he never talked about it that much on campus.

But even the way Brat talks about his solution to illegal immigration is straight from conservative theory: encourage free markets and private property rights around the world.

"I teach third world economic development, and you know, my intent — I mean, if you really want to help these folks — everyone wants to come to this country because we're rich, and the reason we're rich is because we have a very firm rule of law and protection of property rights," Brat said in the Hannity interview. "So if you really want to help the rest of the world, what you've got to do is encourage free markets, private property rights and the strong rule of law and get rid of the dictators in a lot of these countries."

Popular on campus, even among Democrats

As a candidate, Brat has played hardball — he is, after all, the guy who turned Eric Cantor into Mr. Amnesty. But as a professor, he's known as a personal, likeable man who inspires his students and always makes time to help them understand difficult concepts. He's talkative, but charms his students by being a good listener, too. His looks draw favorable comments from students and colleagues, male and female.

"Every single PowerPoint I made for his class I spent 12 hours on," said Calice. "We had his class at 8 in the morning and I never fell asleep."

Angelina Sportelli, a business and accounting major, was planning to attend a different college, but Brat evinced so much enthusiasm during her first meeting with him that she decided to go to Randolph-Macon instead. Students marveled that everyone Brat meets seems to make a lasting impression on him — students who take his freshman economics survey can expect greetings for the next four years.

And Sportelli noted that when she sought his advice about which class to take last summer, "he knew my interests even though I'd only taken two classes with him."

He even came close to convincing Gowan, an avowed Democrat, to vote for him in the primary.

"I was kind of torn between, well, hell it's Dave, but wait, I don't agree with his politics," said Gowan. He decided against it.

For all Brat's emphasis on philosophy and ethics, students said he stood out for his focus on the practical, too. He assigns PowerPoints with an eye toward the work world, students said. And his classroom has a strict business casual dress code.

"He is the only professor that I've ever had that makes us dress up because he knows that after you get out of college you can't wear flip-flops and a T-shirt," said Angelina Sportelli, a business and accounting major who has taken many of Brat's courses.

Social media, though, isn't his thing. "There's all this new stuff, right, the Facebook 'likes' for the young generation, people that know how to do that? I guess more people are doing the Facebook stuff now than the webpage stuff," he said at a church in April.

Brat and his family live in a large house in an upscale neighborhood in Glen Allen. The lawns are immaculate with green grass and there's a large pond down the street. In his spare time, he enjoys basketball and likes to play tennis with his two children, 15-year-old Jonathan and 11-year-old Sophia.

Victory: God's will

Dave Brat was born in Detroit and raised in Alma, Mich., and got a business degree in 1986 from Hope College, a small Michigan liberal arts school that emphasizes Christianity. He went on to get a master's degree from Princeton Theological Seminary, which is not affiliated with Princeton University, in 1990 and then a doctorate in economics from American University in 1995.

It's the time at Princeton Theological Seminary — and a semester at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., where he met his wife, Laura — that suggests the depth of Brat's religious faith. He mentions it frequently on the

campaign trail, and on the night of his big victory, he told Hannity that “first of all, I attribute it to God.”

He even told Richmond magazine that he had intended to teach at seminary. But in his time at Princeton seminary, he said, “I met a lot of great ministers, but they did not understand policy and how economies work” — so he started thinking about how he could “put some of my talents together in a unique way.”

His religious faith is evident in his writings as well. In a 2011 essay titled “God and Advanced Mammon — Can Theological Types Handle Usury and Capitalism?” written for Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology, Brat argues that economic decisions must be made in the context of Church teachings as well as traditional economic ones. He also worries about the declining influence of the church.

“The State can be a force for good,” Brat writes. “The Rule of Law is absolutely essential to a good life. God has instituted government and leaders throughout history and throughout the Biblical narrative. However, the state is growing precisely as the church is fading as a force for good, and this does not seem to be a good trend. God asked the people of Israel: Are you sure you want a king? That is a good question to ask at this time.”

That’s not always how he talks around his colleagues, though. Gowan said Brat seems to mention God more on radio than in personal conversations, and said he’s “definitely not a proselytizer.”

This isn’t Brat’s first time as a political candidate — he tried to run for the Virginia House of Delegates in 2011. But in that race, the Republican nominee was selected by a four-member GOP committee, and it picked another candidate instead.

Now that Brat has succeeded on his second try, in a more spectacular way than anyone could have imagined, Gowan says he suspects his colleague may have mapped out his political career carefully all along.

“I just assumed that he had some political aspirations, and that this was just a way to build some name recognition for future elections,” Gowan said. “You know, he’d lose, but he’d get some coverage because he was running against the House majority leader. But again, I guess he knew more than I did.”

Polls On Left And Right Agree: Eric Cantor Didn’t Lose On Immigration

By Jessica Meyers

[Politico](#), June 12, 2014

A new conservative-sponsored poll mirrors a liberal counterpart and throws more water on notions that the battle over immigration led to the downfall of Majority Leader Eric Cantor.

Only 22 percent of Virginia residents who voted for Cantor’s opponent, Dave Brat, cited immigration as the primary reason for their vote, according to the poll. About 77 percent cited other factors, such as the Republican leader’s focus on national politics instead of local issues.

Americans for a Conservative Direction, the right-leaning branch of FWD.us, commissioned the poll. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg launched the broader advocacy group last year in his first foray into politics.

The results resemble findings in a poll commissioned by liberal advocacy group Americans United for Change. It noted about 72 percent of registered voters in Cantor’s district support reforms.

Immigration reform has stalled in the House for months, and advocates see this summer as the last chance before fall elections. They’ve never considered Cantor much of an ally, but Brat made immigration a central focus of the race and slammed the Republican leader for agreeing to even piecemeal proposals.

And yet “amnesty” — a term Brat used to decry Cantor’s acceptance of legal status for undocumented residents’ children — polled last of five issues GOP voters considered harmful. Instead, nearly 73 percent of voters supported a proposal that would secure the border, go after employers who hire illegal immigrants and establish a pathway to citizenship after certain requirements are met.

The poll notes that about 20 percent of Republican voters oppose immigration reform, a figure that nearly matches the disapproving voters in this race. “The immigration issue was, therefore, a factor in Tuesday’s election, but it was a relatively small one,” the poll concludes. “Rep. Cantor had several more powerful problems with primary voters in his district.”

The findings, unveiled by Republican pollster Jon Lerner at Basswood Research, fall in line with Democratic arguments that immigration had a smaller impact on the race than initially perceived.

“Issues can help define a dissatisfied group of people,” said Scott Corley, the executive director of Compete America, a coalition that supports reform. “But the issue in this race ran deeper and they do for every candidate.”

Cantor’s Defeat Also Thrusts A Democrat Into The Spotlight

By Elena Schneider

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — Jack Trammell is an assistant professor of sociology, a romance novelist, a descendant of Appalachian farmers and the father of seven children in what he calls a blended family.

And as of this week, he is the Democratic candidate in a House race that has suddenly captured the nation’s

attention with the primary defeat of the Republican incumbent, Eric Cantor, the House majority leader. In November, it will be a face-off between Mr. Trammell and his colleague at Randolph-Macon College, David Brat, who triumphed over Mr. Cantor on Tuesday.

Mr. Trammell's electoral path has been much less eventful than Mr. Brat's. Mr. Trammell was nominated at a quiet party convention on Monday. His Facebook campaign page was created the same day, and his Twitter account had only two posts by Wednesday night.

Mr. Trammell said in a statement on Tuesday that Mr. Cantor's loss proved that "Virginians are hungry for a radical change from the dysfunctional and reckless politics being practiced by those in Congress."

"In the coming months," he added, "I look forward to a spirited campaign where we can talk about the issues that matter to our community, and how we can get Congress refocused on the priorities that truly matter to us." It will be an uphill climb to victory: Mitt Romney carried the Seventh District with almost 57 percent of the vote in 2012.

In a Twitter post Wednesday, Mr. Trammell thanked supporters — 14,000 of whom have "liked" his Facebook page — and urged voters to "stay tuned for more info."

Mr. Trammell and his wife, Audrie, have seven children, his campaign website said, "six of whom will be in college this fall."

On a website devoted to the more than 20 books he has written — including "Sarah's Last Secret," a romance novel — Mr. Trammell said he runs a small family farm and is "descended from generations of Appalachian farmers."

He said in his campaign biography that his first experience with politics was at Grove City College in Grove City, Pa., a traditionally conservative Christian school from which he graduated in 1986. The biography emphasizes that "he experienced a de facto ban in the school newspaper due to his more moderate views, and he spoke out against various forms of discrimination still evidenced in higher education."

He later campaigned for Gov. Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts in the 1988 presidential race and President Bill Clinton. He earned a master's degree and a Ph.D. from Virginia Commonwealth University.

At Randolph-Macon, in Ashland, Va., Mr. Trammell is an assistant professor of sociology, specializing in disability studies, and director of Disability Support Services. He joined the faculty in 2000.

"We are proud of both Dr. Brat and Dr. Trammell for their desire to serve our country, and we wish them both the best of luck in November," Robert R. Lindgren, the college's president, said in a statement on the school's website.

Most of Mr. Trammell's books are academic works — "Sarah's Last Secret" notwithstanding — and he has also written a military history column for The Washington Times.

David Brat And Jack Trammell Show Unease In The Spotlight

By Trip Gabriel And Richard Pérez-Peña

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

ASHLAND, Va. — Before the two professors became overnight political rivals in one of the most improbable, high-profile races in memory, they knew each other best as basketball teammates.

David Brat, the economics professor and Republican giant killer who knocked off Representative Eric Cantor, and Jack Trammell, the sociologist and utter political novice who got the Democratic nomination because hardly anyone wanted it, play occasionally on a faculty team against students at Randolph-Macon College here in Ashland.

Mr. Brat is known for his motor mouth and for using his weight to play inside. Mr. Trammell, taller and leaner, relies on quickness. As teammates, they have never been rivals, said Charles Gowan, chairman of the biology department, who also plays. "It's us against more athletic people," Mr. Gowan said. "There's a lot of cooperation, giving the ball up to the open guy, setting picks."

Mr. Brat's upset of Mr. Cantor, the House majority leader, on Tuesday turned them into miscast national figures unprepared for the political fishbowl.

Both professors first appeared as deer caught in the headlights, and their instincts have been to drop from view to get their acts together. After Mr. Brat made a disastrous Wednesday morning appearance on MSNBC, fumbling questions about Syria and the minimum wage, he has refused almost all news media requests.

Mr. Trammell, who lives on a small family farm and was working in his campus office on Thursday, agreed to an interview — as long as he was not quizzed on policy. "I have a hard time thinking back mentally before the primary," he said. "Things just blew up."

The college community is as taken as the national news media with the story line of the two dueling professors who a week ago were obscure, rumpled academics embarking on doomed political excursions that almost no one outside their families, pets and livestock seemed to be paying attention to.

"It means a whole lot of attention on our campus," said Robert R. Lindgren, the president, recalling that the liberal arts college's biggest brush with fame previously was when it admitted a 10-year-old freshman in the 1990s.

"We hope to hold a debate here," he said. "I think that would be a great event."

Talbot Weston, the student government president, hoped the race, in Virginia's Seventh Congressional District, would provoke students' interest in politics as well as elevate the campus's profile. "When people say, 'Where do you go to school?' I say it's a small school just north of Richmond," she

said. But that is likely to change. "It's not going to be quiet little Ashland."

Many here expressed hope that because the candidates are professors at a small college that places teaching above research rather than political professionals, they will avoid the typical scorched-earth campaigning.

"I'm hoping both Dave and I can help position this as a unique kind of campaign situation, where both our commitments to serving our community and the value of education can mesh with well-run political campaigns, and may be the best man win," Mr. Trammell said.

While both candidates polish their political talking points in private, their academic work has drawn scrutiny for evidence of their views, which, despite the collegiality of the basketball court, are drastically different. Mr. Trammell's most recent book, "The Richmond Slave Trade: The Economic Backbone of the Old Dominion," contrasts with Mr. Brat's view that Christian ethics go hand in hand with free-market capitalism.

Mr. Brat's academic work has drawn particular interest because he is seen as the odds-on favorite in a heavily Republican district. Religious ethics rarely enter into mainstream economic theory, but they are topics that Mr. Brat, who describes himself in his writing as a Calvinist, has turned to repeatedly. In a 2011 article, "God and Advanced Mammon — Can Theological Types Handle Usury and Capitalism?" published in a journal of religion, Mr. Brat questioned whether Christianity could be reconciled with government programs.

"Are you willing to force someone you know to pay for the benefits for one of your neighbors?" he asked. "Very few Christians I know are willing to say 'yes' to this question."

In the same essay, he argued: "If we make all of the people good, markets will be good. If markets are bad, which they are, that means people are bad, which they are. Want good markets? Change the people."

Several economists said in interviews that Mr. Brat often appeared not to be writing as an economist. "I did find him pretty confusing," said Justin Wolfers, a professor of economics and public policy at the University of Michigan, and a fellow at the Brookings Institution. "This dude just really wants us all to go to church, and that appears to be his economic policy conclusion."

Mr. Brat has an unpredictable streak. He takes a generally free-market, libertarian stance, but economists of that stripe generally favor relaxed immigration, while Mr. Brat not only opposes it, but used the issue to great effect against Mr. Cantor.

Mr. Trammell took some comfort in Mr. Brat's victory. "Part of what we saw in this primary," he said, referring to Mr. Brat's toppling of Mr. Cantor, "was about getting too disconnected from the people in your district."

He said that he was aware of Mr. Brat's deeply conservative views, but that they never caused disagreements between them. "Around here, we all get to know each other pretty well," he said. "We talk a lot about issues in the world and in education and even delve into politics. In Dave's case, no more than anyone else."

Mr. Trammell is the author of several books, but rather than writing in his academic field, sociology, he focuses on history and fiction. He is also the author of a romance novel, "Sarah's Last Secret." On Wednesday, he received a political baptism — or at least a baptism into the political news media — when Politico excerpted a dozen awkwardly written, semi-steamy sentences. "How I wished I could avoid that first apology that would slide out from between her lips, like some kind of bird sharing its dead meal with the prodigal son," one of the more curious ones went. Welcome to politics, professors.

Trip Gabriel reported from Ashland, and Richard Pérez-Peña from New York.

The Fall Of The House Of Cantor? Hardly.

[Los Angeles Times](#), June 13, 2014

From all the hand-wringing over soon-to-be-former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's astonishing defeat in a GOP primary Tuesday in Virginia, you might think he had been a conciliatory figure determined to keep the federal government on track even when it meant compromising on his conservative principles. That, he was not. So it strains credulity that some pundits and pols are predicting that Republicans will now be even less willing to strike deals with Democrats, and that conservatives will be more influential in the House. It's hard to imagine how Republicans in the House could have been less willing to strike deals, or how conservatives could be more influential there.

Granted, the House GOP's hard-headedness has often been met by intransigence from Democrats in the Senate and the White House. Yet the pattern during Cantor's tenure as majority leader has been clear: House Republicans turned routine practices such as funding the government into a continual exercise in brinkmanship. They compromised only when the public backlash against Washington dysfunction became too fierce to ignore.

The political novice who defeated Cantor, Randolph-Macon College professor Dave Brat, attacked Cantor on a number of fronts, including how little time he spent in the district and how much money he raised from special interests. Nevertheless, much of the political establishment has zoomed in on Brat's criticism of Cantor's support for immigration reform and bipartisan deals to raise the debt ceiling, ease across-the-board budget cuts and end a six-week government shutdown. According to the conventional wisdom, the message from Virginia's 7th District is that lawmakers move toward the center at their own peril.

But if primary voters were determined to root out centrists, Cantor was the wrong place to start. For much of the Republicans' 3 1/2 years running the House, he has been the person conservatives counted on to stiffen the spine of Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio). And the agenda that Cantor set for the House was almost relentlessly partisan, a conservative Republican wish list of measures to roll back programs, lift regulations and reverse administration policies.

The paralysis in Washington is a reflection of the nation's political split, as more of the electorate moves toward the wings and away from the middle. What purists need to understand, though, is that much of the country disagrees strongly with their views — and that in a divided government, neither side gets everything it wants, no matter how firmly it digs in its heels. The deals Cantor reluctantly supported were the messy product of a representative government whose constituents can reach no consensus other than the need to keep the government operating. And his defeat changes nothing about that state of affairs, which is the signal governing challenge of our day.

Eric Cantor And The Death Of A Movement

By Paul Krugman

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

How big a deal is the surprise primary defeat of Representative Eric Cantor, the House majority leader? Very. Movement conservatism, which dominated American politics from the election of Ronald Reagan to the election of Barack Obama — and which many pundits thought could make a comeback this year — is unraveling before our eyes.

I don't mean that conservatism in general is dying. But what I and others mean by "movement conservatism," a term I think I learned from the historian Rick Perlstein, is something more specific: an interlocking set of institutions and alliances that won elections by stoking cultural and racial anxiety but used these victories mainly to push an elitist economic agenda, meanwhile providing a support network for political and ideological loyalists.

By rejecting Mr. Cantor, the Republican base showed that it has gotten wise to the electoral bait and switch, and, by his fall, Mr. Cantor showed that the support network can no longer guarantee job security. For around three decades, the conservative fix was in; but no more.

To see what I mean by bait and switch, think about what happened in 2004. George W. Bush won re-election by posing as a champion of national security and traditional values — as I like to say, he ran as America's defender against gay married terrorists — then turned immediately to his real priority: privatizing Social Security. It was the perfect illustration of the strategy famously described in Thomas Frank's book "What's the Matter With Kansas?" in which Republicans would mobilize voters with social issues, but

invariably turn postelection to serving the interests of corporations and the 1 percent.

In return for this service, businesses and the wealthy provided both lavish financial support for right-minded (in both senses) politicians and a safety net — "wing-nut welfare" — for loyalists. In particular, there were always comfortable berths waiting for those who left office, voluntarily or otherwise. There were lobbying jobs; there were commentator spots at Fox News and elsewhere (two former Bush speechwriters are now Washington Post columnists); there were "research" positions (after losing his Senate seat, Rick Santorum became director of the "America's Enemies" program at a think tank supported by the Koch brothers, among others).

The combination of a successful electoral strategy and the safety net made being a conservative loyalist a seemingly low-risk professional path. The cause was radical, but the people it recruited tended increasingly to be apparatchiks, motivated more by careerism than by conviction.

That's certainly the impression Mr. Cantor conveyed. I've never heard him described as inspiring. His political rhetoric was nasty but low-energy, and often amazingly tone-deaf. You may recall, for example, that in 2012 he chose to celebrate Labor Day with a Twitter post honoring business owners. But he was evidently very good at playing the inside game.

It turns out, however, that this is no longer enough. We don't know exactly why he lost his primary, but it seems clear that Republican base voters didn't trust him to serve their priorities as opposed to those of corporate interests (and they were probably right). And the specific issue that loomed largest, immigration, also happens to be one on which the divergence between the base and the party elite is wide. It's not just that the elite believes that it must find a way to reach Hispanics, whom the base loathes. There's also an inherent conflict between the base's nativism and the corporate desire for abundant, cheap labor.

And while Mr. Cantor won't go hungry — he'll surely find a comfortable niche on K Street — the humiliation of his fall is a warning that becoming a conservative apparatchik isn't the safe career choice it once seemed.

So whither movement conservatism? Before the Virginia upset, there was a widespread media narrative to the effect that the Republican establishment was regaining control from the Tea Party, which was really a claim that good old-fashioned movement conservatism was on its way back. In reality, however, establishment figures who won primaries did so only by reinventing themselves as extremists. And Mr. Cantor's defeat shows that lip service to extremism isn't enough; the base needs to believe that you really mean it.

In the long run — which probably begins in 2016 — this will be bad news for the G.O.P., because the party is moving right on social issues at a time when the country at large is

moving left. (Think about how quickly the ground has shifted on gay marriage.) Meanwhile, however, what we're looking at is a party that will be even more extreme, even less interested in participating in normal governance, than it has been since 2008. An ugly political scene is about to get even uglier.

Overdosing On Tea

By Eugene Robinson

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

The Republican Party's reliance on tea party support is like an addict's dependence on a dangerous drug: It may feel good at first, but eventually it eats you alive.

No House majority leader had ever been ousted in a primary before Eric Cantor's shocking defeat on Tuesday. Republicans who tell themselves it was Cantor's own fault — he lost touch with his Virginia district, he tried to have it both ways on immigration, he came to be seen as part of the Washington establishment — are whistling past the graveyard.

Cantor didn't just lose, he got clobbered. His opponent, college professor Dave Brat, spent just \$200,000 on the race — not much more than Cantor's \$5 million campaign spent on meals at steakhouses. Yet a powerful incumbent, running in a district whose boundaries were custom-designed for his benefit, lost by an incredible 11 percentage points.

There can be no doubt that the tail is now wagging the dog. The tea party should no longer be thought of as just a faction of the GOP. It's calling the shots.

Certainly, other Republican incumbents have managed to survive this primary season, with the possible exception of Sen. Thad Cochran of Mississippi, who is thought likely to lose a runoff against tea-party-backed challenger Chris McDaniel. But many establishment Republicans have hung on by claiming the tea party's radical vision as their own.

And what is that vision? An unimaginable reduction in the size and role of government that would reshape the nation in ways most Americans would never accept.

Look at Brat, for example. He has views that are appropriate for academia — he teaches economics at Randolph-Macon College — but would be disastrous if put into practice. He is reportedly a devotee of the writings of novelist Ayn Rand, whose worship of unfettered capitalism was matched only by her loathing of government, taxation and anything resembling a social compact.

I believe many people would agree with Brat's excoriation of the "crooks up on Wall Street" who escaped punishment after their recklessness caused the 2008 financial meltdown. Some have described him as an economic populist stance, but I wonder if the description fits.

When NBC's Chuck Todd asked about the minimum wage, Brat responded that "you cannot artificially make up wage rates." So is this a debate most Americans are ready to

have? Not whether the minimum wage should be raised, but whether it should exist?

Brat believes in fiscal restraint, which is a standard Republican position — until it veers into nihilistic territory such as refusing to raise the debt ceiling, as most tea party Republicans in the House have consistently voted. He questions the federal role in setting education policy — at a time when U.S. schools, by almost any measure, are falling behind.

Brat also opposes comprehensive immigration reform that could provide a path to citizenship for the more than 11 million men, women and children who are in the United States without papers. This is the issue that brought conservative radio talk show hosts Laura Ingraham and Mark Levin to endorse and campaign for him.

Cantor told voters that he, too, opposed "amnesty" for undocumented immigrants. But he was seen as "soft" on the issue, which should be translated as "in touch with reality." Republican intransigence on reform threatens to make Latinos — the biggest minority group in the nation — a longtime loyal constituency of the Democratic Party. If this happens, simple arithmetic makes it hard to imagine how Republicans will be able to compete in national elections.

In other words, the tea party is pushing the GOP toward ideological purity and electoral marginalization. Smart Republicans don't want to walk off the cliff. But deviating from the tea party path, as Cantor did, can mean being sent home.

The fascinating thing about Brat's victory is that it came without much support from national tea party leaders, who declined to invest in him because they believed he couldn't win. This was a grass-roots defenestration, performed without adult supervision. The standard way of dealing with an insurgent movement — find a way to co-opt its leaders — won't work if there are no effective leaders.

The GOP has to decide whether it intends to participate responsibly in the enterprise of government or stand on the sidelines, shouting invective and throwing stones. One of which just hit the majority leader of the House of Representatives in the head.

What Dave Brat Taught Conservatives

A real free-market agenda remains more popular than redistribution.

By Kimberley A. Strassel

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Cantor Bows Out With Grace

Anxious about the country's direction, voters cast a ballot for change.

By Peggy Noonan

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Obama's Odds With Congress: Bad To Worse

By Peter Baker

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — One day in April, President Obama called Representative Eric Cantor, the House majority leader, to wish him a happy Passover. However the call started, it went downhill from there. By day's end, both sides were arguing about what was said and taking shots at the other for not getting along.

The relationship was in fact prickly from the start. Mr. Obama considered the Republican leader a partisan obstructionist and his main *bête noire* in the House, while Mr. Cantor viewed the president as an aloof liberal intent on shoving his agenda down the throat of Congress.

And yet as toxic as the relationship was, Mr. Cantor's defeat in a Republican primary in Virginia this week is no victory for what remains of Mr. Obama's legislative agenda. Much as White House officials grinned privately at the unceremonious ouster of a rival, Mr. Cantor's political collapse has already been seized as a lesson by other Republicans to be even more determined in their opposition to Mr. Obama.

The president had already given up on major legislative action this year, other than an immigration overhaul, and now even that looks implausible, given how much the issue was wrapped around Mr. Cantor's neck by his primary challenger. Beyond dooming the president's initiatives, the majority leader's defeat could also lead to a new deadlock over spending bills required for the basic operation of government this fall and another showdown over raising the debt ceiling next year.

"It's clear the Republicans do not want to do anything with Obama — nothing," said Ray LaHood, the Republican former congressman from Illinois who served as the president's transportation secretary in his first term. "Nobody wants to cast tough votes. Everybody wants to get through these elections and then see what happens."

For the White House, Mr. Cantor's defeat has only reinforced the conclusion that few if any priorities will get through Congress and therefore Mr. Obama will have to continue relying on executive power. If immigration legislation is now beyond reach, he may choose to go further in easing deportations on his own authority.

"Our focus this year has been on using the president's pen and phone to advance our agenda," said Dan Pfeiffer, Mr. Obama's senior adviser. "Ultimately, the Republicans have to decide whether they want to abandon their obstructionist ways. If they do, there are ample opportunities to make progress. That was true before Cantor's primary, and it's still true after it."

Conservative activists, though, said Mr. Cantor's defeat would force Republicans to go beyond simply opposing the president and actually begin advancing an alternative agenda. If they do so, these activists argued, it will be harder for the president to simply dismiss the opposition as obstructionist.

"It forces Obama to fight on policy grounds," said Matt Kibbe, the president of FreedomWorks, a leading Tea Party group. "One of the outcomes of this surprise in Virginia is you're going to see the policy wing of the Republican Party, the guys that actually want to run on issues, regain their footing. And I think that once the dust settles, that's a good thing for the G.O.P. in November."

Both sides agree that little will get done before the midterm elections, except perhaps for legislation aimed at fixing a dysfunctional Department of Veterans Affairs. Patrick Griffin, who was a legislative director for President Bill Clinton, said Democrats were just as anxious to avoid serious legislation before the election, for fear such votes would be used against them. But there is still a chance for progress, he said, when the midterms are over. "It's a whole new world out there after the election," Mr. Griffin said.

Phil Schilliro, a former legislative director for Mr. Obama, said the best the president could hope for in November was holding onto the Senate and perhaps picking up a few seats in the House. "If Democrats do better than people expect in November, Republicans could start getting worried about a terrible election in '16," he said. "Their political interests could change. To me, that's where the possibility lies."

Either way, Mr. Cantor's downfall generated no tears in the White House. He was among the Republicans who gathered for a now well-known dinner on the night of Mr. Obama's first inauguration in January 2009 to forge a strategy to oppose the new president from the very start.

Three days later, the two clashed in an encounter that would set the tone for the next five and half years. Mr. Obama had invited congressional leaders to the White House in the depths of the recent recession to talk about a stimulus program, only to find himself in a debate with Mr. Cantor.

After some back and forth, Mr. Obama pulled out his trump card. "Elections have consequences," he said, in Mr. Cantor's recollection, "and Eric, I won."

Aides said the president was being lighthearted and remembered it differently. "We just have a difference here, and I'm president," Mr. Obama said in this version.

Either way, the back and forth cemented impressions early. Mr. Obama and his team bristled at what they thought was a lack of deference to the president's popular mandate. Mr. Cantor deemed it representative of Mr. Obama's "my way or the highway" attitude.

Mr. Cantor went on to rally Republicans against the stimulus program and did not lose a single vote from his caucus. He also was a leader in holding the party against Mr.

Obama's health care program. After Republicans won control of the House in the 2010 midterm election, the White House viewed Mr. Cantor as the obstacle blocking a so-called grand bargain over spending with Speaker John A. Boehner.

But over the last year or so, Mr. Cantor also moved to find ways to resolve the fiscal fights over taxes and the government shutdown. And even though he opposed Mr. Obama's proposed immigration overhaul, he had signaled willingness to consider far more limited measures like legalizing the children of adults who came to the country illegally. For that, he was judged insufficiently stalwart in standing up to Mr. Obama.

"It is incredible to me that Eric Cantor moved from the singular, highest-profile, most-important political figure on Capitol Hill stopping the president's agenda to the guy who was the chief compromiser with the president," said John Murray, a Cantor strategist and former aide. "The disconnect there is insane. It's so out of whack with reality."

Mr. Murray was with Mr. Cantor just after taking the president's Passover call, which came shortly after the White House had issued a statement saying Republicans had "repeatedly failed" to fix immigration law. Mr. Cantor bristled and after the call released his own statement saying, "You do not attack the very people you hope to engage in a serious dialogue."

As of this week, the dialogue, serious or not, is over.

House Of Kevin McCarthy

By Jake Sherman And Anna Palmer, John Bresnahan
[Politico](#), June 12, 2014

He hangs out with billionaire Elon Musk, rides bikes with actor Kevin Spacey and counts Arnold Schwarzenegger and Condoleezza Rice as buddies.

He visits Silicon Valley almost every month, and flies from Washington to his district in Bakersfield, Calif., virtually every weekend to see his family, even if he stays for just 12 hours. When schmoozing with celebrities, the one-time deli owner often snaps a selfie on his iPhone — he'll show his collection to anyone who wants to see it. He gushes about the painting of President Abraham Lincoln in his office or the modernized version of "Washington Crossing the Delaware" displayed in his conference room.

But don't let the affability and toothy smile fool you. Kevin Owen McCarthy lives and breathes the House of Representatives. He even sleeps in his office.

In roughly 48 hours, McCarthy of California put a stranglehold on the race to replace Eric Cantor as majority leader with a swift, efficient and aggressive whip operation — demonstrating an impressive display of insider muscle. By late Thursday, Texas Rep. Pete Sessions — McCarthy's main rival for majority leader — dropped out of the race.

In a Capitol filled with jealousy, envy, and an endless supply of backbiting, McCarthy has a huge base of members

willing to go to bat for him — and put him in the majority leader's suite after just seven years in Congress.

"Committed, hard-working, tenacious," said Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R-Ga.), when describing McCarthy's leadership style. "I think Kevin is going to do a great job as the leader. He's battle-tested from the whip's position and that is what it's going to take to kind of get us through. He's a good guy, he's been a good friend of mine. We did 'Young Guns' together, we worked real hard. I know his work ethic."

McCarthy's strong personal relationships were on display as he ramped up his whip team for the majority leader race. On Wednesday, a slew of McCarthy allies, including powerful chairmen — like Dave Camp and Fred Upton of Michigan — filed into his office to discuss the contest and get their whip assignments. His standing with the right is strong enough that most conservatives were unwilling to challenge him.

McCarthy, 49, knows his Golden State prospects are limited, and he sees the rough-and-tumble House chamber as his long-term political home. The California Republican is a veritable almanac of American politics, and he can run through congressional districts as if he's reading from cue cards. McCarthy knows the personal details of all of his colleagues' lives — their spouse's names and where they met, their number of children, and where they went to college. He loves one-on-one sessions with lawmakers to build a personal bond. When he makes the two-hour drive from Los Angeles International Airport to Bakersfield, McCarthy is frequently on the phone for the entire ride with donors, members or friends.

Whenever Congress recesses, if he isn't barreling home, McCarthy is on a plane to visit some lawmaker's district — sometimes fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, doing lunch in North Carolina, or rubbing elbows with donors in New York or Chicago.

As the California Republican rises in leadership, his small network of former aides and K Street confidantes does as well. Former senior aides downtown include Uber's Brian Worth, who served as his coalitions director; former policy director and general counsel Stephen Pinkos, now at American Continental Group; and former communications director Erica Elliot, now at Crowell & Moring.

Over the past seven years, McCarthy has amassed a small "kitchen cabinet" of lobbyists who he works closely with, including Greg Maurer of Facebook; Kirsten Chadwick of Fierce, Isakowitz & Blalock; Dan Meyer of the Duberstein Group and Brian Conklin of USAA. Joe Wall of Goldman Sachs, Amy Best of American Express, Kyle Nevins of Capitol Counsel, and Ryan Triplette of Franklin Square Group are also in McCarthy's circle.

While McCarthy is hardly a policy wonk, at least two industries — tech and energy — are considered big winners if he becomes majority leader.

Tech in particular is expected to get a boost from McCarthy. Over the years, he has appointed himself an unofficial ambassador to Silicon Valley for House Republicans, trying to woo the industry. Last year, he took six members on a trip to visit companies like Google and Facebook and has plans to do another one this year.

McCarthy definitely has his detractors. There are those who privately question his policy chops and intellectual abilities. McCarthy's whip operation has faced heavy criticism at times, although a lot of that rancor could be just as easily directed at Cantor or Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio). And he hasn't enjoyed the political levers to move members that previous whips had at their disposal, such as earmarks.

Even some of the Californian's colleagues wonder how Democrats will react when they see McCarthy sitting across from them at the negotiating table. He is not a person who inspires fear in either Republicans or Democrats, although neither did Cantor, sources on both sides of the Capitol note. But that also isn't McCarthy's style either.

As well as McCarthy knows the GOP Conference, he has struggled to win votes at times. In several instances earlier on in the House majority, Republicans had to pull bills from consideration due to weakness in the vote count.

But those issues won't likely derail McCarthy's ascension. Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) is still contesting the race, even as fellow Texas Republican Jeb Hensarling took a pass. Rep. Raul Labrador (R-Idaho), who doesn't have a great relationship with McCarthy, was calling around Thursday afternoon, inquiring about a possible challenge.

Sessions, though, is seen as a very longshot to win, with Labrador facing an even more uphill battle. McCarthy has privately told donors that he has the race sewn up already.

Sessions — and Labrador, if he formally gets into the race — do not have much time to come up with the votes to beat McCarthy. Boehner scheduled the leadership election for June 19, which benefits McCarthy with his strong operation.

Even Hensarling is close to McCarthy. The two had several conversations as Hensarling pondered whether to run, and Hensarling even asked McCarthy to make sure he showed up for a Financial Services Committee vote on Thursday, according to several GOP sources (McCarthy still serves on that panel). In the end, Hensarling decided to forgo a challenge.

McCarthy's political skills are key to his success. A former congressional aide, the Republican had never even run for elected office before 2000, when he became a Kern Community College District trustee. By 2002, McCarthy won a seat in the California State Assembly — and was immediately chosen to be Republican leader. In 2006, McCarthy was elected to Congress, and by 2010, he was majority whip.

He is now owed political chits throughout the House Republican Conference, and he is virtually certain to continue ascending the leadership ladder because he has done the grunt work that's required. McCarthy has been to more than 40 districts this cycle, and he is currently scheduled to visit another dozen, although that number is bound to increase if he becomes majority leader.

McCarthy has been to another 90 D.C.-based events, with at least 17 more scheduled at this time.

Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.) said McCarthy has an uncanny ability to know what "makes people tick, what their priorities are and where they're coming from."

"He's got a natural ability to connect with people — everyone sees that — but most people don't see the incredible amount of work he puts into helping people and working through policy," McHenry said.

If McCarthy wins, it will be a mostly seamless transition between Cantor and McCarthy. The pair have worked closely together for seven years, and some of their senior aides are tight.

"I think it might change for the better in that Kevin's staff is a little bit easier to work with, Kevin is a little bit easier to work with," Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-S.C.) said. "He's not as conservative as, say, I am — not as conservative as I want him to be, but I always felt I had the chance to voice my opinions with Kevin. It's not going to be a dramatic departure from Cantor."

Yet there are definitely differences between Cantor and McCarthy, despite a close personal relationship and their role as "Young Guns" trying to change the GOP.

Cantor is a Southerner from a purple state, close to Wall Street and armed with degrees from George Washington, William and Mary and Columbia University. McCarthy owned a deli, attended California State University in Bakersfield for two degrees and served in the legislature of a blue state. They both worked for the men that preceded them in office: McCarthy for Rep. Bill Thomas (R-Calif.) and Cantor for Tom Bliley (R-Va.).

McCarthy is described as warm and friendly, while Cantor is seen as strategic, but not overly personable. McCarthy banters easily with reporters. Cantor had a more adversarial relationship with the Fourth Estate.

"Kevin's style is much more based on his personal relationships with somebody," said a Republican lobbyist close to McCarthy. "He is not someone who runs over people. Kevin isn't a bully like that."

McCarthy has also focused some attention on energy policy, including the House Energy Action Team. He's strongly advocated building the Keystone XL pipeline — something supported by all House and Senate GOP leaders — as well as more domestic and oil and gas production.

McCarthy Consolidating Support For House Majority Leader As Race For Whip Intensifies

By Ed O'Keefe, Robert Costa

[Washington Post](#), June 13, 2014

The defeat of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Va.) in a Republican primary was an astounding triumph for the tea party movement, but there was little evidence Thursday that the insurgency could take advantage of it by getting one of their own elected to the suddenly vacant leadership position.

In the race to replace Cantor, who will step down from his leadership position at the end of July, House Republicans began coalescing around Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (Calif.), who is more aligned with the establishment wing of the party.

The leadership battle began to crystallize Thursday morning as a popular conservative, Rep. Jeb Hensarling (Tex.), who chairs the House Financial Services Committee, announced that he wouldn't run for majority leader. The decision cleared the field for another Texan, Rep. Pete Sessions, to run as McCarthy's main foe.

"Jeb is out; I'm running for majority leader," Sessions said Thursday morning shortly after Hensarling announced his plans.

McCarthy spent Tuesday night consoling Cantor and other stunned colleagues after the leader's unexpected loss. Restless on Wednesday morning, McCarthy skipped breakfast and began working on his campaign in his office about 7 a.m., said aides who are familiar with his plans but not authorized to speak publicly.

McCarthy is relying on a tight-knit inner circle of colleagues to secure support, a group including Reps. Richard Hudson (N.C.), Fred Upton (Mich.), Dave Camp (Mich.) and Harold Rogers (Ky.) — influential names in the House GOP conference.

The team is using a ranking system once employed by then-House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) that McCarthy still thinks is a smart way to track friends and foes. His 232 colleagues in the House GOP conference are given a ranking between one and five. A one means the colleague is a loyalist, while a five denotes a critic or someone who needs more convincing, aides said. Rankings for individual members are a closely guarded secret.

McCarthy's associates said that they are taking Sessions's bid seriously but that they don't think he has the political apparatus to prevail.

Sessions spent Thursday morning at a meeting of Republican lawmakers from the South, pitching himself as an experienced alternative to McCarthy, a longtime rival.

"The process got fast, but it's a process. I'm out there talking to delegations," he said in an interview. "I'm giving people a real view of how I'd lead. I've chaired the Rules

Committee and the [National Republican Congressional Committee], and I'm looking to bring people in, sell our message and lead."

But on the House floor later Thursday afternoon, Sessions wandered through the aisles, finding it hard to gain votes as McCarthy's aides worked members as well. Sessions went up to popular conservative figures, such as Rep. Trey Gowdy (S.C.), hoping to find support, but was not met with extensive encouragement.

Meanwhile, McCarthy appeared to be consolidating support. House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (Wis.), the GOP's 2012 vice presidential nominee, said he will support McCarthy. And Rep. Adam Kinzinger (Ill.), a McCarthy ally, said he thinks the Californian has secured the votes. "At the end of the day, I think McCarthy has got this one over the top," he said.

One holdout was conservative Rep. Tom Price (Ga.), who declined Thursday to say whom he plans to endorse, reflecting some tension within the GOP.

"It's a secret ballot," he repeated when pressed on his preference for leader. Price, who has long pushed for more conservatives in the leadership and once ran for the conference's fourth-ranking position, also declined to comment on McCarthy's ideology.

Working on the premise that McCarthy will become leader, several members appeared to be in play for his whip job.

Rep. Peter Roskam (Ill.), McCarthy's chief deputy whip, has told colleagues that his experience makes him a natural choice. But Rep. Steve Scalise (La.), chairman of the Republican Study Committee, is arguing that with McCarthy and House Speaker John A. Boehner (Ohio) at the top, he can be a voice for the House's conservative Southerners and tea party lawmakers.

Scalise held a conference call late Wednesday with GOP members, touting the support of more than 25 colleagues across the conference, including Rep. Aaron Schock (Ill.) — a signal that Roskam cannot count on the entire Illinois delegation.

Roskam, meanwhile, worked the floor Thursday afternoon, consulting with Reps. Tom Graves (Ga.) and Lamar Smith (Tex.), two popular conservatives.

Others with an eye on the whip job include Rep. Marlin Stutzman (Ind.) and, potentially, Sessions, if he does not gain traction for leader.

Adding to the drama surrounding the week's unexpected events, two former GOP House speakers made rare appearances in the Capitol this week.

Newt Gingrich (Ga.) visited Thursday and said that McCarthy's expected and seemingly easy rise to majority leader is a testament to the power of having an extensive political operation already in place — and McCarthy's affable personality.

"Unless you've been out there organizing for a long time, it's hard to beat somebody who has been counting votes for years and knows the entire conference," Gingrich said. "Legislative bodies reward friendliness."

Late Wednesday night, former speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) was spotted guiding a family around the Capitol, telling stories about famous House members.

"Eric had a lot of promise and some people pinned their hopes to him," Hastert said as he paused outside of the office he once occupied. "But things change in this business. One day you're at the top and the next you're saying goodbye to your staff."

Sessions Drops Out Of GOP Leadership Race, Clearing Way For McCarthy

By Lisa Mascaro

[Los Angeles Times](#), June 13, 2014

The last remaining major rival to Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy in the race for House majority leader dropped out of contention late Thursday, clearing the way for the conservative from Bakersfield to assume the House's second-ranking position.

In a statement, Rep. Pete Sessions of Texas said he was quitting the race because he feared going forward would divide the party.

"After thoughtful consideration and discussion with my colleagues, I have made the decision to not continue my run for House majority leader," Sessions said in a statement.

"Today, it became obvious to me that the measures necessary to run a successful campaign would have created unnecessary and painful division within our party. At this critical time, we must remain unified as a Republican Conference. As always, I stand ready and willing to work with our team to advance the conservative agenda that the American people demand and deserve."

Members of the tea party wing of the GOP have been unenthusiastic about McCarthy, 49, who holds the No. 3 position in the leadership. Despite his conservative voting record, he is seen as too close to the party's establishment wing. Some members also argued that the House GOP needs a leadership that reflects its strength in the South. Currently, all the members of the leadership come from states that President Obama carried in the last two elections.

But the insurgents were unable to coalesce behind a single candidate who could overcome McCarthy's advantages in the race. Several prominent conservatives declined to challenge him, and he quickly won the support of others.

McCarthy, the House majority whip, was heir apparent to Majority Leader Eric Cantor, whose surprise defeat this week in his primary bid for reelection touched off the leadership struggle.

The election for the new majority leader is set for next week.

A conservative challenger from the GOP's tea party flank could still emerge. But now most of the jockeying in the House ranks will turn to the fight over who will replace McCarthy. That is likely to be a showdown pitting Rep. Peter Roskam of Illinois, the chief deputy whip, against two members from red states.

In GOP Upheaval, A Front-Runner – And Discontent

By Donna Cassata, Erica Werner

[Associated Press](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) – California Republican Kevin McCarthy quickly amassed support to become House majority leader on Thursday, but his likely ascent shut conservatives out of the chamber's top leadership jobs, leaving them fuming and exposing deep fissures within the GOP.

Within 48 hours of Rep. Eric Cantor's lightning primary-election downfall, McCarthy and his deputies aggressively rounded up votes with a pitch to Southern Republicans and pointed private conversations on the House floor in a race that occasionally had the markings of a personality-driven contest for class president.

Republicans sought to project an aura of unity but failed to quiet conservative complaints that such quick party elections after Cantor's defeat gave them little time to rally around an alternative who better reflects the right's ideology and the emboldened tea party. Votes are scheduled for next Thursday for majority leader, the No. 2 job behind Speaker John Boehner, and for majority whip, the No. 3 party post.

But that may well not be the end of it. Several Republicans asserted that next week's action won't quiet ambitious lawmakers or factions in the GOP caucus, and leadership contests after November's national midterm elections could produce a brand new lineup.

Despite conservative discontent, Boehner's job does not appear to be in serious jeopardy for now. But some lawmakers noted there was a limit to his security.

"The speaker is speaker in 24-hour increments. Literally 50 guys can call a revolt," said Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma, a Boehner ally.

Cantor suffered a stunning defeat to little-known college professor Dave Brat in Tuesday's Virginia Republican primary, a race that underscored the rift within the GOP between pragmatic, establishment conservatives and farther-right contenders pressing for no-compromise ideological stances. Brat cast Cantor's past positive comments on possible immigration changes as amnesty for those here illegally – a characterization Cantor heatedly rejected – and turned it into a defining issue in the race.

Cantor is the first House majority leader to lose his seat by being defeated in a party primary election since the post was created in 1899, according to Eric Ostermeier, research associate at the University of Minnesota's Center for the Study of Politics and Governance.

Cantor announced on Wednesday that he would step down as majority leader at the end of July. He endorsed McCarthy as his successor and the House whip moved swiftly to secure the votes.

"I don't think anyone counts votes better around here, and I think he has a very, very commanding lead," said Rep. Cole.

McCarthy, the four-term congressman from Bakersfield, California, will face Texas Rep. Pete Sessions, the chairman of the Rules Committee, in the contest for majority leader. Another Texan with stronger bona fides in the conservative ranks, Rep. Jeb Hensarling, passed on the race on Thursday, saying, "After prayerful reflection, I have come to the conclusion that this is not the right office at the right time for me and my family."

If conservatives were powerless to put the brakes on McCarthy's quick rise they weren't keeping quiet about their frustration.

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, was among several lawmakers calling on GOP leaders to put off the election, suggesting it was rigged.

"Leadership's tactic has always been call the election as fast as you can, don't let anybody have time to organize except those who had the heads-up and the head start," King said.

Hensarling had been the conservatives' choice, and King and others had no one else to get behind.

"I'm looking for a candidate that has not supported some form of amnesty, and Jeb fit that, and now we don't have an announced candidate that fits that and I'm very troubled by that," King said. "Because if there's any single issue that cost Eric Cantor his seat, it was amnesty."

The discontent seemed to irritate some of McCarthy's supporters who mocked criticism that their candidate wasn't conservative enough.

"When they say 'More conservative this, more conservative that,' it doesn't mean anything to me. The more exotic members around here once again failed to have a candidate, they failed to show up. They don't debate. So they don't like any of the candidates," said Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., who was lining up votes for McCarthy.

"They just come out here to you guys and complain, and they blog and they Facebook, but when it's time to actually raise money and go recruit candidates and win elections so that you can stop Obama which is what they say they want to do, they don't have the capability of doing it," Nunes said.

Rep. Charles Boustany, R-La., said some conservatives are "never satisfied."

While the majority leader race narrowed, the contest to replace McCarthy as whip expanded with the addition of Rep. Marlin Stutzman of Indiana.

Already seeking the post were Reps. Peter Roskam of Illinois, who has been chief deputy whip, and Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana. He is head of the Republican Study Committee, the organization representing conservative GOP lawmakers.

Currently all four top GOP leaders are from states President Barack Obama carried in 2012: Ohio, Virginia, California and Washington state. Several Republicans have argued that members of the GOP leadership should be limited to lawmakers from deep red states that voted for the GOP in recent presidential elections.

"I think that's a silly argument," said Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, who argued that in the House "we don't elect people by state, we elect them by districts."

Speaker Boehner, asked whether he would endorse McCarthy, sidestepped the question, saying, "I can work with whoever gets elected."

In a closed-door GOP caucus on Wednesday, Boehner stressed the importance of unity ahead of midterm elections when the GOP is expected to increase its majority in the House and possibly win control of the Senate.

After the national elections, another round of contests for party leaders will occur, and Republicans could field a new slate of candidates.

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GOP Whip Seat Up For Grabs

By Jake Sherman, John Bresnahan, Lauren French
[Politico](#), June 12, 2014

The race for the third most powerful position in the House — majority whip — is wide open.

With less than a week until Republicans vote on the most significant changes to their leadership in nearly a decade, Peter Roskam of Illinois, Steve Scalise of Louisiana and Marlin Stutzman of Indiana are circling the 233-member House Republican Conference in a furious search for support.

Scalise has the lead, having secured roughly 100 lawmakers, but Roskam is still working the conference, and has netted between 75 and 85 commitments. Stutzman, several sources said, has somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 supporters — many of them from the conservative corner of the conference

This is all fluid, as each candidate tries to make the case that they're better — and better prepared — than the

other guy. Scalise has the most momentum, but he has not locked up the race.

"It will go down to the wire next week – it's hard to say," said Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.). "Most members have been talked to now and I've been through these races before and you'll get down to a big group of members that won't commit no matter what. Probably no one will really have the votes until they end."

The uncertainty in the whip race is a contrast to the contest to replace Virginia's Eric Cantor as majority leader. Kevin McCarthy of California, the current whip, seems to have locked it up before it even started. He is the overwhelming favorite to become the next majority leader.

The results of the whip race carry big consequences for Republicans. With McCarthy virtually destined to move up the ranks, the whip's seat is the last hope — for now — for anybody desperate to move into leadership. And, of course, whoever wins the whip job will one day find themselves in line to become speaker.

All of the potential whips have vastly different styles — and pitches.

Roskam, currently the chief deputy whip, walks around the House floor with a whip card bent in his hand, his jacket buttoned, pointing at members before approaching them. Roskam leans in when he talks and quietly states his case: I know how to pass bills. I'm calm in tough situations. You've known me. I help you get things done.

When they respond, he cocks his head to the side and listens.

Scalise, the chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee, has a simple pitch: We need someone from a red state in leadership who can work with everyone. Scalise argues that as chairman of the conservative caucus, he can help craft sound policy to get a bill across the finish line.

Stutzman is the newcomer to the race, only announcing his intentions on Thursday morning. He is talking to conservatives who are unhappy with Scalise and Roskam and trying to siphon off their votes. Stutzman invokes two high profile recent GOP governors in his pitch, hoping to link himself to their successes. He has commitments from the hard right corner of the conference, but says he's confident he can lock up northeastern, midwestern and western votes.

"I come from the state of Indiana where we've been doing some great things under the leadership of Mitch Daniels and Mike Pence, and a legislature I've been a part of," Stutzman said in an interview, describing his pitch. "I feel like I have experience to take to the leadership table and talk about it, and not only bring conservatives a strong voice, but also listen and bring both sides of the party together."

Many people believe he is running to raise his profile to run for the chairmanship of the Republican Study Committee.

Neither Roskam nor Scalise consented to interviews.

Leadership votes are conducted on secret ballots, making them notoriously difficult to predict. And three-way races can be especially volatile. The winner needs to secure 117 votes to win.

Still, Scalise would appear to have the inside track at the moment. He has very strong support inside the Texas delegation, the biggest in the Republican Conference, and across the South. That gives Scalise a solid base of support to build on.

Roskam's allies are clearly concerned about the Scalise's early success, and the Illinois Republican is trying to step up his own appeals to members. As of Thursday afternoon, Roskam or his deputies have whipped about two-thirds of the GOP Conference, according to sources close to the race. With the House adjourning on Thursday, Roskam was headed home to attend a family event, although he is expected to be working the phone heavily. He also may return to Washington as early as Sunday to continue his efforts.

"It is definitely problematic," said source close to the Roskam camp, speaking of the Illinoisan's challenging campaign. "Scalise is running really hard. It's an uphill battle."

There is hefty criticism of all three men, which is why the race is intensely competitive. Some complain that Roskam is too close to leadership. With McCarthy ascending to the No. 2 slot, it would be hard for the conservative conference to stomach the establishment aligned Roskam at whip. In a troubling sign, Roskam is having problems locking down the support of Republicans from his own state.

Others complain that Scalise is insufficiently conservative for true believers, and some complain he worked too much with leadership when he was chairman of the Republican Study Committee.

And no one is saying anything about Stutzman, so far, because of his late entry into the contest.

Each candidate has secured surrogates to beat back on the criticism. Roskam is being helped by conservative Reps. Randy Forbes of Virginia, Kay Granger of Texas, Richard Hudson of North Carolina and Trey Gowdy of South Carolina to help lock up his vote. Scalise is deploying Rep. Patrick McHenry of North Carolina, Stephen Fincher of and Phil Roe of Tennessee, Trent Franks of Arizona, Dennis Ross of Florida and Roger Williams of Texas. Scalise has locked up support across the south, including Texas, which is the largest delegation in the south.

"I have seen what Steve Scalise has been doing to move conservative values forward, working cooperatively, not just to make a statement, but to get something done, and I want that at the leadership table, not folks who just want to make statements and don't want to move forward, but folks who are willing to do what it takes to move forward," said Rep. Rob Woodall, a Georgia Republican.

Both Roskam and Scalise are quizzing members about who they would support on a second ballot. It's a clear sign that both camps know they don't yet have the race locked up.

Cantor Loss May Temper House Leaders

By Jonathan Weisman

[New York Times](#), June 13, 2014

WASHINGTON — For all the talk of a lurch to the right after the primary election defeat this week of the House majority leader, Representative Eric Cantor of Virginia, the race to remake the Republican leadership may actually leave its top ranks more moderate.

Representative Kevin McCarthy of California appeared all but certain on Thursday night to rise from majority whip — the No. 3 job — to majority leader after Representatives Pete Sessions and Jeb Hensarling, both of Texas, bowed out of the race to succeed Mr. Cantor.

Unless a new contender emerges before the leadership vote next Thursday, the new majority leader will have a less conservative voting record than the man he is replacing.

The fight for Mr. McCarthy's old job would then pit Representative Peter Roskam of Illinois, whose voting record is similar to Mr. McCarthy's, against Representatives Steve Scalise of Louisiana and Marlin Stutzman of Indiana, who have more conservative records.

A Roskam victory would mean that after a week and a half of turmoil, Republicans would have traded a leader from suburban Richmond for one from suburban Chicago. The aggregate rating of the House majority leader and majority whip by the American Conservative Union would have slipped from 84.25 over the past two years to 78.5. A perfect conservative score would be 100.

After a meeting of House members from the South on Thursday, Representative Lynn Westmoreland of Georgia said he had "made it pretty clear we need someone from a Southern state."

"There's got to be at least one spot," he said.

The leadership race was clarified on Thursday, less than 24 hours after Mr. Cantor announced that he would leave his leadership post by July 31. Mr. McCarthy's aides and allies confidently declared that he already had enough votes among House Republicans to become majority leader, especially after his biggest threat, Mr. Hensarling, decided against running. Then on Thursday night, Mr. Sessions bowed out, too.

"Today, it became obvious to me that the measures necessary to run a successful campaign would have created unnecessary and painful division within our party," Mr. Sessions said in a statement. "At this critical time, we must remain unified as a Republican conference."

Besides the prestige factor, the majority leader is the official keeper of the House floor schedule, choosing what legislation to consider and what bills to stymie. And while the

House speaker ostensibly leads the whole chamber, the majority leader is free to be a partisan figure.

The race for the No. 3 spot grew more complicated with Mr. Stutzman's decision to compete. He could divide the most conservative voters, giving Mr. Roskam a lead at least in the first round of voting. But leadership votes come in a series of tallies, each dropping the lowest vote-getter from the previous round until one wins a majority. If conservatives eventually unite around Mr. Scalise, the chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee, he would have the edge.

"I think Scalise and Kevin would make nice choices," said Representative Lee Terry, Republican of Nebraska, reflecting the split-ticket choice between a more moderate and more conservative pick that many lawmakers appear to be making.

Speaker John A. Boehner of Ohio, confident of his own position, said he announced his intention to run for the speakership again at the end of this year because, "I didn't want to leave any doubt." He made that announcement on Wednesday at a closed-door meeting of House Republicans.

He also made it clear he wants Republicans to make their decisions quickly and move on.

"We're going to do it next week," he said. "I'm sure some will argue that's too soon. Some will argue it's too long. But it's important that we resolve this issue in a fair amount of time so that we can do the work we were elected to do."

Leadership races do not neatly break down by ideology and geography. Personal relationships often triumph. Representative Trey Gowdy of South Carolina, one of the most conservative members, will back Mr. McCarthy and his chief deputy, Mr. Roskam, saying he does not blame the current leaders for the House's intermittent disarray.

"I tend to not blame the wardens as much as the inmates when things don't go as planned," he said.

But the Scalise team, headed by Representatives Patrick T. McHenry of North Carolina, Ann Wagner of Missouri and Aaron Schock of Illinois, played up their candidate as the only real chance for change.

If American Conservative Union ratings are determinative, the choices are relatively clear. Mr. Cantor leaves the scene with an 84 percent rating in 2013 and a 95 percent rating in 2012. Mr. McCarthy's ratings the same years were 72 percent and 86 percent.

Mr. Roskam's rating in 2013 was 76 percent and in 2012 was 80 percent, while in both those years, Mr. Scalise scored 100 percent. Mr. Stutzman was nearly as conservative.

Representative Jason Chaffetz, Republican of Utah, said the elections may be just a dry run for fiercer leadership battles after the November elections. "I don't think anybody saw this coming," Mr. Chaffetz said. "It's not as if anyone was gearing up for a vigorous, six-day campaign, which in essence this is."

U.S. Retail Sales Rise Less Than Expected In May

[Reuters](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Cooling Sales Curb Optimism On U.S. Growth Rebound: Economy

By Jeanna Smialek

[Bloomberg News](#), June 13, 2014

American consumers paused for breath in May as retail sales climbed less than forecast following an impressive three-month run, tempering forecasts for a rebound in growth this quarter.

The 0.3 percent increase in purchases last month fell short of the median estimate of economists surveyed by Bloomberg that projected a 0.6 percent advance, Commerce Department figures showed today. Receipts for April were revised up to cap the strongest three months in almost two years.

The slowdown in demand last month prompted some economists to shave forecasts for second-quarter gross domestic product just as reports this week signaled the economy slumped at the start of the year even more than previously estimated. Other data today showing consumer confidence is firming and the job market is healing brighten the outlook for the rest of 2014.

"It's a story of gradual improvement," said Michelle Girard, chief U.S. economist at RBS Securities Inc. in Stamford, Connecticut, and the second-best forecaster of retail sales over the past two years, according to Bloomberg data. "We're not getting the big acceleration that many people hoped for."

Stocks retreated, with the Standard & Poor's 500 Index falling for a third day, as investors reacted to the disappointing data and rising tension in Iraq. The S&P 500 declined 0.5 percent to 1,934.38 at 12:57 p.m. in New York.

Consumers' spirits are rising as job prospects strengthen. The Bloomberg Consumer Comfort Index rose to a five-week high of 35.5 in the week ended June 8, another report today showed. A gauge of the state of the economy increased to a six-week high, while measures of personal finances and whether it's a good time to spend also advanced.

"The most important of all economic indicators is employment, and since the jobs picture has improved, consumer attitudes are more upbeat," said Richard Yamarone, a senior economist at Bloomberg LP in New York. "If sustained, this could result in greater spending and overall economic growth."

Sentiment is also being underpinned by limited dismissals as companies find demand is strong enough to maintain headcounts. A report from the Labor Department today showed applications for jobless benefits held below this year's average, rising by 4,000 to 317,000 last week. Claims so far in 2014 have averaged around 324,000.

Retail sales estimates in the Bloomberg survey of 83 economists ranged from gains of 0.2 percent to 1 percent. The Commerce Department revised April figures to show a 0.5 percent gain rather than the previously reported 0.1 percent increase.

Receipts climbed 2.9 percent from February through April, the strongest three-month gain since July to September 2012.

Six of 13 major retail categories showed increases last month, indicating the advance wasn't broad-based, today's Commerce Department report showed. Auto dealers were among those showing the biggest sales advance in May. Purchases at gas stations also picked up, reflecting higher fuel costs.

Excluding those two categories, purchases were unchanged after a 0.3 percent increase in April that was previously estimated as a 0.1 percent drop.

Job gains are giving more American households the means to shop. The economy added 217,000 positions in May after a 282,000 gain the prior month.

"The incoming U.S. indicators are consistent with the substantial rebound in growth for the current quarter," Emily Kolinski Morris, senior U.S. economist at Dearborn, Michigan-based Ford Motor Co., said on a sales call on June 3. "Recent readings on housing have improved slightly and the labor market continued its gradual recovery."

Industry figures showed demand surged in May, with purchases of cars and light trucks reaching a 16.7 million annualized pace, the highest since February 2007.

Core sales, the figures that are used to calculate GDP and exclude such things as autos, gasoline stations and building materials, were unchanged last month after a revised 0.2 percent increase in April. The prior month was previously reported as a 0.1 percent drop.

Economists at Macroeconomic Advisers in St. Louis cut their growth forecast for this quarter to 3.7 percent from 3.8 percent after the sales report. Their tracking estimate for the first quarter showed a 2.1 percent rate of contraction, which would be the worst performance since the first three months of 2009, when the economy was still in a recession.

The figures for the first three months of the year have deteriorated since a Census Bureau report yesterday showed spending on health-care services dropped last quarter compared with the gain currently estimated.

Mending finances may prompt households to sustain purchases into the second half of the year. Property values in 20 U.S. cities increased 12.4 percent in March from the same

month in 2013, according to an index from S&P/Case-Shiller on May 27. Stock prices have also climbed, helping those who own financial assets.

"Homeowners increasingly believe that improvements made to their homes will increase their value, and consumers' views around personal finances continue to improve," Robert Niblock, chief executive officer, said in a May 21 Lowe's Cos. earnings call. "Performance has already improved in May."

Even so, recent gains have benefited wealthier consumers more than others – bad news for lower-end retailers.

Worse-off customers have faced tepid earnings gains. Wages posted a 2.1 percent year-over-year increase in May, near the average for the last four years. Consumer prices climbed 2 percent in the 12 months ended in April, which means incomes merely kept up with inflation.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is "dealing with the structural changes that are happening in the marketplace," William S. Simon, Wal-Mart U.S. chief executive officer, said in a June 6 call. "Our income segments remain challenged."

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US Retail Sales Rose 0.3 Percent In May

[WSB-TV Atlanta](#), June 13, 2014

U.S. retail sales rose modestly in May as consumers turned cautious in their spending. But the weaker-than-expected result is unlikely to derail overall economic growth in the second quarter.

Retail sales rose 0.3 percent in May, helped by a jump in demand for autos, the Commerce Department said Thursday. The result follows a 0.5 percent climb in April, which was revised up from an initial estimate of 0.1 percent. March sales surged 1.5 percent — the biggest one-month gain in four years.

Analysts said any disappointment in May was offset by the change in April's figure.

"May retail sales fell short of estimates, although upward revisions to April make it about a wash versus consensus forecasts," said Jay Feldman, director of U.S. Economics Research at Credit Suisse.

Retail sales had fallen sharply in January as winter storms cut into shopping and various other types of economic activity. Economic growth went into reverse in the first quarter, shrinking at an annual rate of 1 percent. But the revival in consumer spending has led economists to predict a solid rebound to 3 percent growth or better in the current April-June quarter.

For May, auto sales increased 1.4 percent. The rise in auto sales had been expected after dealers reported last week that sales in May jumped to a nine-year high, helped by

brisk demand for SUVs and pickup trucks. But sectors outside of autos did not fare as well.

Paul Dales, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said that the declines at department stores and appliance stores were hard to understand, given the rapid rise in employment. Households are also feeling wealthier with the strong gains in the stock market and in home prices.

"We expect it won't be long before sales start rising more rapidly," Dales said in a research note. "Overall, the fundamentals suggest that the U.S. economy remains healthy."

Sales at hardware stores and furniture stores increased, but department store sales fell 1.4 percent. A broader category that includes department stores and big box stores such as Wal-Mart and Target saw sales fall 0.6 percent.

Sales were also down at specialty clothing stores and electronics stores but posted a solid gain of 0.6 percent in the category that includes Internet shopping.

Many economists are forecasting that overall economic growth will remain at a solid 3 percent level in the second half of the year.

Part of the optimism reflects expectations that employers will keep increasing their hiring, with the extra jobs boosting incomes and supporting stronger consumer spending.

The economy added 217,000 jobs in May, the fourth straight month of a gain of more than 200,000. That hasn't happened since 1999. The unemployment rate remained unchanged in May at 6.3 percent, the lowest in more than five years.

Applications For Jobless Aid Up Modestly

By Josh Boak

[Associated Press](#), June 12, 2014

WASHINGTON — More Americans filed for unemployment benefits last week, but claims for jobless aid remain near pre-recession levels.

The Labor Department said Thursday that weekly applications for unemployment benefits rose 4,000 to a seasonally adjusted 317,000. The four-week average, a less volatile measure, increased to 315,250. These figures are near the jobless claims levels before the outbreak of the Great Recession in December 2007.

Applications are a proxy for layoffs, so the claims data show that employers are dismissing fewer workers. When businesses are confident enough to hold onto staff, they may also step up hiring. That is a positive sign for economic growth, as more jobs usually help lift consumer spending.

Last Friday, the Labor Department said employers added 217,000 jobs in May as the unemployment rate held steady at 6.3 percent.

The steady hiring after the economy shrank during the first three months of the year because of the winter weather point to faster growth ahead.

Monthly job gains have averaged 234,000 for the past three months, up sharply from 150,000 in the previous three. The May unemployment rate, which is derived from a separate survey, was the lowest rate in more than five years.

Gross domestic product fell 1 percent in the first three months of 2013. Many economists expect that number could be further revised downward, while growth returns as warmer weather has generated more hiring and consumer spending.

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Jobless Claims In U.S. Increased Last Week To 317,000

By Michelle Jamrisko

[Bloomberg News](#), June 12, 2014

Applications for unemployment benefits in the U.S. rose to 317,000 last week, holding below this year's average and signaling sustained progress in the labor market.

Jobless claims climbed by 4,000 in the week ended June 7, a Labor Department report showed today in Washington. The median forecast of 52 economists surveyed by Bloomberg called for 310,000. Claims have averaged around 324,000 so far in 2014.

Faster sales over time would make it easier for those employers whose headcounts are lean to step up hiring. While payroll gains are on pace for their best year since 1999, stronger wage growth is needed to help provide a bigger push for the consumer spending that accounts for almost 70 percent of the economy.

"Workforces are generally pretty thin," Guy Berger, U.S. economist at RBS Securities Inc. in Stamford, Connecticut, said before the report. "Lower claims, all things being equal, are going to lead to better payroll growth."

Consumers took a break in May after a three-month surge in shopping that has underpinned growth. A 0.3 percent increase in retail sales followed a revised 0.5 percent advance that was much larger than previously estimated, Commerce Department figures showed today.

Stock-index futures were little changed after the reports, with the contract on the Standard & Poor's 500 Index expiring this month falling 0.1 percent to 1,942.8 at 8:33 a.m. in New York.

Other Labor Department figures today showed prices of imported goods rose 0.1 percent in May after a 0.5 percent decrease the previous month.

Economists' estimates in the Bloomberg survey for jobless claims ranged from 300,000 to 340,000 after an initially reported 312,000 in the prior week.

No states were estimated last week and there was nothing unusual in the data, a Labor Department spokesman said as the report was released to the press.

The four-week average of claims, a less-volatile measure than the weekly figure, climbed to 315,250 from 310,500 in the prior week.

The number of people continuing to receive jobless benefits increased by 11,000 to 2.61 million in the period ended May 31. The unemployment rate among people eligible for benefits held at 2 percent during that period, today's report showed.

More muted firings typically pave the way for acceleration in job growth. Employers added 217,000 workers to payrolls in May, lifting the average monthly advance so far this year to 213,600. If that pace is sustained, job gains in 2014 would be the best since 1999 and exceed the 205,000 average projected in a May 2-7 Bloomberg survey of 77 economists.

An increase in job openings points to further progress in the job market. The number of positions waiting to be filled rose by 289,000 to 4.46 million in April, the highest since September 2007, data from the Labor Department's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey showed earlier this week.

A brighter employment picture is keeping companies such as Dearborn, Michigan-based Ford Motor Co. upbeat about U.S. growth this year.

"While still challenging, labor market conditions have continued to improve modestly," which will contribute to "positive momentum for the economy in the current quarter and into the second half," Emily Kolinski Morris, senior U.S. economist at Ford, said on a June 3 conference call.

At the same time, about two-thirds of the labor market indicators that Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen monitors haven't yet returned to pre-recession strength. Still-elevated levels of underemployment and long-term unemployment, and a weaker rate of workers who are comfortable enough to quit their jobs, are among the gauges that remain weaker than 2004-07 averages.

The muted gains are allowing the central bank to continue reductions in monthly asset purchases while maintaining record-low interest rates. The policy-making Federal Open Market Committee in April trimmed its bond-buying by another \$10 billion, to \$45 billion per month.

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U.S. Mortgage Rates Rise For A Second Week

By Prashant Gopal

[Bloomberg News](#), June 13, 2014

Mortgage rates in the U.S. rose for a second week, extending an increase in borrowing costs from an eight-month low.

The average rate for a 30-year fixed mortgage was 4.2 percent this week, up from 4.14 percent, Freddie Mac said in a statement today. The average 15-year rate climbed to 3.31 percent from 3.23 percent, according to the the McLean, Virginia-based mortgage-finance company.

Homebuyers got a temporary reprieve when rates unexpectedly dropped for five straight weeks beginning in early May. Economists expect loan costs to climb in the second half of the year as the Federal Reserve continues scaling back bond purchases that have helped support housing demand. Policy makers next meet on June 17-18.

"Mortgage rates have confounded expectations by falling in the face of a strengthening economy this spring," Keith Gumbinger, vice president of HSH.com, a Riverdale, New Jersey-based mortgage-data firm, said yesterday in a telephone interview. "But now it would seem that interest rates are behaving a little more normally."

Lower rates spurred an increase in loan applications, data from the Mortgage Bankers Association showed yesterday. In the week through June 6, the group's purchase index rose 9.3 percent, the biggest gain since late February, and the refinancing measure increased 11 percent.

The average rate for a 30-year fixed mortgage reached a high of 4.58 percent in August. A year ago, it was 3.98 percent.

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Mortgage Rates Move Higher For Second Week In A Row

By Kathy Orton

[Washington Post](#), June 12, 2014

Mortgage rates moved higher for the second week in a row, according to the latest data released Thursday by Freddie Mac.

The 30-year fixed-rate average climbed to 4.2 percent, with an average 0.6 point. It was 4.14 percent a week ago and 3.98 percent a year ago.

The 15-year fixed-rate average jumped to 3.31 percent, with an average 0.5 point. It was 3.23 percent a week ago and 3.1 percent a year ago.

Hybrid adjustable-rate mortgages were mixed. The five-year ARM average increased to 3.05 percent, with an average 0.4 point, rising above 3 percent for the first time in three weeks. It was 2.93 percent a week ago and 2.79 percent a year ago.

The one-year ARM average was unchanged at 2.4 percent with an average 0.4 point.

"Mortgage rates continued to climb for the second week in a row following the increase in 10-year Treasury yields," Frank E. Nothaft, Freddie Mac vice president and chief economist, said in a statement.

"Also, the economy added 217,000 jobs in May, following a 282,000 surge in April and a 203,000 increase in March. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate in May held steady at 6.3 percent."

Despite two weeks of increases in mortgage rates, applications surged last week, according to the latest data from the Mortgage Bankers Association.

The market composite index, a measure of total loan application volume, rose 10.3 percent. The refinance index jumped 11 percent, while the purchase index increased 9 percent.

The refinance share of mortgage activity accounted for 54 percent of all applications.

WSJ Survey: Economists Optimistic Stage Is Set For Pickup In Wage Growth

Pay Seen as Key to Kicking Broader Recovery Into Higher Gear

By Kathleen Madigan

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

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U.S. Stocks Fall Sharply

Retail Sales, Jobless Claims Weaker Than Forecast

By Chris Dieterich

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

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Iraqi Unrest May Drive Gas Higher

By Gary Strauss

[USA Today](#), June 13, 2014

Escalating tensions in Iraq spilled over to energy markets again Thursday, pushing crude oil prices to eight-month highs and setting the stage for stubbornly high gasoline prices in the U.S. to rise even further.

Benchmark West Texas crude oil jumped \$2.13 to \$106.53 a barrel, and Brent crude surged \$3.21 to \$113.16 as oil-rich northern Iraq descended into chaos and militants threatened to seize control of the south, where much of the nation's daily 3.4 million barrel output is refined. Gasoline futures climbed 8 cents to \$3.08 a gallon on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

The jumps are likely to drive the price of regular unleaded gasoline – now about \$3.64 a gallon – up 5 to 10

cents in the coming days and keep summer prices elevated, says Tom Kloza, senior energy analyst at gasbuddy.com.

"We're not looking at a Gas-zilla event; it'll probably be a slow drift higher rather than skyrocketing," he says.

Iraqi oil production has already been cut by about 10%, or about 300,000 barrels a day, since March.

"The question is, who is going to fill the gap? Saudi Arabia? That's what the market is looking at," says John Kingston, global news director for industry tracker Platts Energy.

Gasoline averaged \$3.58 a gallon between Memorial Day and Labor Day last year. But retail prices have averaged about \$3.65 for the past month – unlike 2011, 2012 and 2013, when prices plateaued weeks ahead of peak summer driving season. This year, higher demand, lower-than-expected supplies and declining production propped up crude oil prices before militants escalated their attacks.

Oil's price rise grounded airline and other fuel-dependent transportation stocks Thursday. Among them: United Continental Holdings, down 6% to \$42.60; American Airlines, down 5% to \$40.20; Delta, down 5% to \$38.50; and JetBlue, down 5% to \$9.94. Federal Express eased 2.5% to \$139.21.

Senate Confirms Fischer, Two Other Nominees For Fed

By Howard Schneider

[Reuters](#), June 12, 2014

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

House Approves Permanent Small-Business Tax Break

Break Allows Small Businesses to Write Off up to \$500,000 in New Equipment Purchases

By John D. McKinnon

[Wall Street Journal](#), June 13, 2014

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Coal-mining Jobs 'in Free-fall' After EPA Regs

More losses feared as new rules take effect

By Patrice Hill

[Washington Times](#), June 13, 2014

The nation's coal mines are closing down so rapidly in the wake of a raft of federal environmental regulations targeting coal that mining employment is now in a "free-fall," according to a report from a leading industry research firm.

SNL Energy said in a new survey that mining jobs have fallen 8.3 percent to 79,658 on average in the year ending March 31, with 5,700 jobs lost just in the last quarter. The

figures are based on data provided by the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Coal mining jobs peaked at the end of 2011 at 93,084, but have been on a steep decline since then, mostly as a result of a steady stream of regulations issued by the Environmental Protection Agency aimed at curbing toxic pollutants and closing down many of the nation's aging coal-fired power plants, SNL said.

Hardest hit is the central Appalachian area, where the plentiful reserves of coal are heavily infused with sulfur and other pollutants targeted by the EPA. Mining jobs have plummeted by nearly 15 percent in the Appalachian region in the last year, while regions like Wyoming and Illinois with cleaner coal have added only a relatively few jobs, SNL found.

The job losses to date reflect the effects of past EPA regulations targeting mercury, sulfur and other toxic pollutants. They do not as yet reflect the impact of far-reaching EPA rules issued last week to cut carbon dioxide, the leading greenhouse gas, by 30 percent by 2030. Coal-fired power plants are the biggest source of carbon emissions in the U.S. today.

"The employment outlook in the coalfields could get worse" under the latest EPA regulations, said SNL analyst Neil Powell, noting that EPA itself has estimated that the use of coal for generating electricity in the U.S. will plunge by 32 percent under the regulations.

The United Mine Workers is estimating that the greenhouse gas regulations will destroy 75,000 jobs in coal mining, power plants and railroads that transport the coal. That is nearly a third of the 300,000 "direct coal generation jobs" currently in the U.S., the UMW estimates.